



The Reverend
M. JOSEPH STENNETT

Vertue sculp.



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THE
WORKS

Of the late

Reverend and Learned

Mr. *Joseph Stennett*:

In FIVE VOLUMES.

To which is prefix'd

Some ACCOUNT of his LIFE.

VOL. I.

Containing those SERMONS which
were publish'd by himself.

LONDON:

Printed for J. DARBY, D. MIDWINTER and A. WARD,
J. OSBORN and T. LONGMAN, J. NOON, F. CLAY,
T. COX, R. FORD, R. HETT, and J. GRAY.
M.DCC.XXXII.

WORKS

Of the late

Reverend and Learned

John Joseph

In Three Volumes



London

VOL. I

Containing those sermons which
were published by himself

LONDON

Printed by J. D. Moore, and A. W. ...
of the University of ...
R. ...
M.DCCC.XXXI.

P R E F A C E.

THE Works of Mr. STENNETT are properly, in the title page, said to be in five Volumes; tho' four only were subscribed for, and are now printed in a set: because his Answer to Mr. Ruffen's book upon baptism makes up the fifth volume; which was indeed published many years since; but the edition being so large (consisting of several thousands) that a sufficient number remain unsold, it may be had at an easy price, separate from the other four.

As to the four volumes which are now printed, the first of them contains all those sermons which were before published by himself, and have already met with so good an acceptance in the world, that nothing more need be said of them in this place.

The second and third volumes are a collection of such sermons as were taken in short-hand from his mouth, as he delivered them: excepting that in the second volume the Reformation Sermon is taken from his own manuscript, the application being published in that brief manner in which he had committed it to writing, whereas in the delivery it was much

Vol. I.

A

larger;

larger; and the sermons on Phil. ii. 2. and Tit. i. 5. had his emendations in some of the first pages. The other sermons in these volumes, tho they would have appeared much more to advantage, had they been revised by the author, may however be depended upon as his own; many of them being printed from a collation of copies, taken as he spoke them, by two different hands. If the language may not always appear so correct, as what he wrote himself; yet that spirit of piety which they all breathe, will doubtless recommend them to persons of a like taste. And when it is considered, that in his preparations for the pulpit he used only to write short hints of the heads of discourse, and references to texts of scripture, and that he committed things, not words to memory^a; every candid reader will rather admire that the style is so correct, and the sermons attended with so few digressions, than be displeased to find them not in all respects so exact as those in the first volume.

The fourth volume contains his¹ poems; as well all those which had before been published by himself, as such others which at this distance of time could be recovered, and were any ways fitted to see the light. The collection had been considerably larger than it is, if either the author had given the last hand to several of his pieces, or all those which were finished by

^a *Vid. Account of his life, pag. 12.*

him had been preserved. But several of his papers, lodged in the hands of friends, are lost; and it was judged proper to suppress others, which were left imperfect. Nor is it pretended, that all those which are now presented to the public are of equal value; many of them being the product of his younger years, which, 'tis presumed, may be easily distinguished, tho they are not printed in order of time. And perhaps it may afford some pleasure to observe the gradual rise and improvements of a good genius.

It is to be lamented, that some of his best discourses were neither committed to writing by himself, nor transcribed by those who usually wrote after him. That we have them not under his own hand is indeed no wonder, from what has been said already. Besides, as the fatigue of writing them down after he had delivered them, considering the multiplicity of his other engagements, was more than he could bear; so he was much more zealous to do good in the course of his preaching, than desirous of honour: and the hand, to which we are indebted for a great part of those in the second and third volumes, is unhappily disabled from that and other useful services.

'Tis owing to the death of many of his intimate friends, and the loss of some of his papers, that the memoirs of his life are so short and imperfect. But under these disadvantages, it was thought better to present them as they are,

are, than to affirm any thing without sufficient grounds.

It may not be amiss here to inform the public, that altho Mr. Stennett's Answer to Ruffen is so printed in an octavo form, that it will very well suit with the four volumes now published; yet as it is in a smaller character, should encouragement be given for re-printing it on the same letter and paper with these, it may still be done.

12 JY 62

E R R A T A in Vol. I.

Page 202. line 21. for *it* to read *to it*.

317. l. ult. dele *that*.

335. l. 22. r. *parliaments*.

406. l. 26. r. *ennoble*.

421. l. 11. r. *examples*.

Vol. II.

Page 102. line 24. read *he may not be*.

416. l. 27. for *unconcerned* r. *unconvinced*.

Vol. III.

Page 70. line 18. read *infallibility*.

218. l. 18, 20. transpose *happiness* and *employment*.

294. l. 1. r. *wisthal*.

295. l. 8. r. *blessed are the men*.

Vol. IV.

Page 229. l. 9. for *brow* r. *bow*.

S O M E



SOME
A C C O U N T
O F T H E
L I F E

Of the Reverend and Learned

Mr. Joseph Stennett.



R. JOSEPH STENNETT was born in the year 1663, at Abingdon in the county of Berks. His father, Mr. EDWARD STENNETT, descended from a family of good account in Lincolnshire. His mother's name was QUELCH, whose parents were of good repute in the city of Oxford. They were both very pious and worthy persons, and justly deserved the character given them in the epitaph inscribed on their tomb at Wallingford,

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lingford, which was composed by their son, and is inserted among his printed poems.

The part Mr. Edward Stennett took in the civil wars, being on the side of the Parliament, exposed him to the neglect of his relations: and afterwards to many difficulties. He was a faithful and laborious minister: but his dissent from the established church depriving him of the means whereby to maintain his family, which was large, he applied himself to the study of physic; by the practice of which he was enabled to breed up his children, and to give them a liberal education, notwithstanding he bore a considerable share of the persecution which the Dissenters underwent at that time. While I speak of his sufferings, it may not be amiss to preserve an account of one very extraordinary deliverance he met with, and which I have often heard his son relate in the following manner.

He dwelt in the castle of Wallingford, a place where no warrant could make forcible entrance, but that of a Lord Chief Justice: and the house was so situated, that assemblies could meet, and every part of religious worship be exercised in it, without any danger of a legal conviction; unless informers were admitted, which care was taken to prevent: so that for a long time he kept a constant and undisturb'd meeting in his hall. A gentleman who was in the commission of
the

the peace, and his very near neighbour, being highly incensed at the continuance of an assembly of this kind so near him; after having made several fruitless attempts to get his emissaries admitted into the house in order to a conviction, in the rage of disappointment resolved, together with a neighbouring clergyman, upon doing it by subornation of witnesses. They accordingly hired some persons fit for their purpose, to swear they had been at those assemblies, and heard prayer and preaching there, tho they had never been in the house on those occasions. The clergyman's conduct in this affair was the more censured, because he had professed a great friendship for Mr. Stennett, and was under considerable obligations to him; having often had his assistance in the way of his profession, as a physician, for his family, without any reward. Mr. Stennett finding an indictment was laid against him on the Conventicle Act, founded upon the oaths of several witnesses, and being well assured that nothing but perjury could support it, was resolved to traverse it, and accordingly did so. The assizes were held at Newbury; and when the time drew near, there was great triumph in the success these gentlemen proposed to themselves: when on a sudden the scene was changed; news came to the Justice, that his son, whom he had lately placed at Oxford, was gone off with a player: the concern whereof, and the ri-

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ding in search of him, prevented his attendance in the court. The clergyman, a few days before the assizes, boasted much of the service which would be done to the Church and the neighbourhood by this prosecution, and of his own determination to be at Newbury to help carry it on : but to the surprize of many, his design was frustrated by sudden death. One of the witnesses, who lived at Cromish, was also prevented by being seized with a violent and sad disease, of which he died. Another of them fell down and broke his leg, and so was hindered. In short, of seven or eight persons engaged in this wicked design, there was but one left who was capable of appearing : he was a gardiner, who had been frequently employed by Mr. Stennett at day-labour, but never lodged in his house, nor was admitted to the religious assemblies held there. They thought to make him, as he was a servant to the family, a very material evidence ; and kept him in liquor for several days to that purpose. But coming to his reason just as the assizes drew on, he went about the town, exclaiming against himself for his ingratitude and perjury, as well as against those who had employed him ; and absolutely refused to go. So that when Mr. Stennett came to Newbury, neither prosecutor nor witness appearing against him, he was discharged of course.

Mr.

of Mr. Joseph Stennett. 7

Mr. Edward Stennett had several sons and one daughter, besides those who died young. His eldest son, Jehudah, afterwards an eminent physician at Henley upon Thames, wrote an Hebrew grammar at nineteen years of age; which was printed, and well received by the public. Another of his sons, Benjamin, proved a valuable and useful minister; but died young. His daughter, chiefly by the instructions of her brother Joseph, acquired such skill in the Greek and Hebrew languages, as to consult the Scriptures in their originals with ease and pleasure. She was an excellent woman, and married to a worthy gentleman, Mr. William Morton, of Knaphill, in the county of Bucks.

But of all Mr. Stennett's children none made such a proficiency in literature as his second son Joseph, or gave greater proofs of a serious regard to religion. Being trained up in a family, where there was so much genuine and undisssembled piety, with the blessing of God upon his father's ministry, he became a happy instance of that early conversion, which in some of his printed discourses he has so well recommended to others.

What an early and just sense he had of the advantages of such an education, appears from the following passage, written when he was very young, and found among his papers since his death: "O
" God of my salvation, how abundant was
a 4 " thy

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“ thy goodness ! O invaluable mercy ! thou
 “ didst season my tender years with a reli-
 “ gious education ; so that I sucked in the
 “ rudiments of christianity as it were with
 “ my mother’s milk, by the gracious admo-
 “ nitions and holy discipline of my godly
 “ parents. This was an antidote sent from
 “ heaven against the corroding poison of
 “ sin : this made conscience speak, while my
 “ childish tongue could but stammer : this
 “ is a branch of thy divine bounty and
 “ goodness, for which my soul shall for
 “ ever bless thee.”

Having finished his grammar learning at
 the public school in Wallingford, he soon
 mastered the French and Italian languages ;
 became a critic in the Hebrew, and other
 oriental tongues ; successfully studied the li-
 beral sciences, and made a considerable pro-
 ficiency in philosophy. And it was with
 an early view to usefulness in the character
 of a divine, that all his diligent application
 to his studies tended. As to divinity, tho
 he carefully read the Fathers of the first
 ages, and impartially examined and consi-
 dered the most celebrated schemes which
 later times have produced : tho he paid a
 due deference to the works of those, who
 have learnedly and judiciously laboured to
 remove the difficulties objected to our holy
 religion : and tho he was willing to receive
 light wherever it was to be found ; being
 fond of no opinion, either for its novelty or
 antiquity,

antiquity, if it did not appear to be true; nor ashamed of any notion in religion, because it was grown out of fashion: yet I have often heard him say with pleasure, that he was the better satisfied with his principles, because they were formed on a diligent and impartial study of the holy scriptures themselves. These indeed were his constant study from a child: and how he profited in them, sufficiently appears by his works.

He came to London in the year 1685, and for the first five years employed himself in the instruction and education of youth. And being now sensible that it was time to study men as well as books, he endeavoured to cultivate an acquaintance with several persons eminent for their piety, good sense, and learning: and nature had so well furnished him with a capacity of pleasing in conversation, that he seldom failed of recommending himself to men of that character.

He was bred up with a true sense of the value of English liberty; and had very early felt the smart of persecution, having in the reign of King Charles II. attended his father a considerable time in prison for the cause of conscience and religion. About this time therefore he wrote several witty pieces, especially in poetry, which were published, and tended to encourage the spirit of liberty in the people. They were much
taken

taken notice of, but never wore his name. It is well known, that by the artful management of the court, several well-meaning persons among the Baptists, as well as of the other denominations of Dissenters, were prevailed on to compliment King James on his declaration for liberty of conscience. Mr. Stennett, young as he was, understood the lure; and was greatly concerned for those who were led into the snare, but most of all for the danger this compliance threatned to our constitution. On this occasion therefore he rallied the conduct of his honest, tho' beguiled friends, in a very keen and witty copy of verses; which he took care should be dropt amongst them where they usually met, so as to come safe to their hands, and theirs only: and it was not without its effect. He is said likewise to have been the author of some of the *Poems on state-affairs*, which had been printed privately, and were collected together just after the Revolution: but which they were, is uncertain.

In the year 1688 he was married to Mrs. Susanna Gill, daughter of George Gill Esq; an eminent French merchant; who at the time of the revocation of the edict of Nants had left his native country, and a very considerable estate there, for the sake of religion. Mr. Gill's elder daughter was married to the reverend Mr. Daniel Williams,

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Williams, afterwards Dr. Williams, who proved a generous friend to Mr. Stennett.

By the earnest solicitations of his friends being about this time prevailed on to appear in the pulpit, he was soon taken notice of, especially at an evening-lecture which he preached in Devonshire-square. The congregation which observed the seventh day, meeting then at that place, and afterwards at Pinners-hall, had been for some time deprived of their worthy pastor, the pious and learned Mr. Francis Bampfeild; who after various sufferings and many years confinement died a prisoner for the sake of a good conscience. This people soon fixed their eyes upon Mr. Stennett as a proper successor to so excellent a person. Another situation might have been more to his temporal advantage, and there were not wanting offers of that kind; yet he preferred the invitation of this small people, by reason of his agreement with them in principles: accordingly he was ordained their pastor the fourth of March 1690; and tho they were able to do but little towards the support of his family, which proved numerous, yet no temptation could ever prevail on him to leave them, but he continued their faithful and most affectionate pastor to his dying day. His public labours amongst them were, as has been said, on the seventh day; but he preached to

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to divers other congregations constantly on the first day.

The manner in which his ministry was conducted, sufficiently discovered that he pursued the true ends of it; to convince men of sin, and lead them to Christ for life and salvation; to make them truly wise, and good, and happy. He laboured industriously to answer these great and good ends by the diligent preparations of his study: and yet those who were nearest him know, how humbly he would express his sense of the necessity of the divine assistance; and with what holy warmth he would plead with God for the help of his Spirit. The subjects of his discourses were well chosen; and the skill he shewed in handling them will best appear from those which are published. He used to bring nothing with him into the pulpit, except some short hints of the heads of his discourse, and references to texts of scripture; so that he committed things only, and not words, to memory: but tho his diction was extemporary, yet it was very easy and natural, for he had a great command of the English language. His voice was low, but sweet and musical: and as he spoke the true sense of his own heart and experience; so the suitable air of his countenance, and the agreeableness of his address, seldom failed of recommending what he said to the attention of judicious hearers. If he entered into a description

tion of the felicity of the heavenly state, such a sweet smile would dwell upon his face, while his melodious tongue gave the beautiful representation, as charmed and captivated the hearts of his audience. And when at the close of a discourse he came to reason with sinners about their unhappy condition, and to set before them the generous proposals of the gospel, together with the fatal consequences of their impenitency; he would so mix his tears with his expostulations, as the affections of but few in the assembly could remain unmoved.

His judgment in casuistical divinity, and his large acquaintance with experimental religion, were attended with such a sweetness and tenderness of spirit, as invited many persons of afflicted minds and doubting consciences to apply to him for advice; who always met with a hearty welcom, and seldom went away without relief.

His endeavours to restore any of his flock, who wander'd out of the ways of religion, were indefatigable: and those labours were managed with such a zeal for God's glory, and so apparent a view to their truest interest, the dignity of his office being always maintained with a most affectionate tenderness to the souls of men; that it must be a hardned mind indeed which could continue insensible under his reproofs.

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He paid a strict regard to the ordinances of the New Testament, being solicitously careful therein to keep close to what he believed was the original institution. And as he was well qualified for every part of his office, so he shined very much in this. Particularly in the administration of the Lord's supper, he seldom failed to awaken the most proper sentiments in the minds of the communicants, and command the attention of every spectator. His mind was remarkably engaged in that ordinance; which occasioned the *Hymns* he composed for the celebration of it, and which he solemnly dedicated to the great Redeemer. In that dedication he spoke his very soul: and some of his friends have heard him say more than once, that tho he found it very hard to please himself in any thing he did, yet that composition was his favourite song.

Some of his leisure hours were filled up in translating useful books out of French into our own language: among which was the Bishop of Chiapa's *Account of the cruelties of the Spaniards in America*; and Dacier's *Plato*, &c. At other times he diverted himself in exercising his poetical genius; and, as his friend Mr. Tate, the Poet-laureat, justly said of him, *He had the happiness to be a good poet, without being a slave to the Muses*. Tho he sometimes employed himself and entertained his friends with poems of a pleasant

sant and facetious nature; yet he would never let any thing go into the world under his name, but what was of a serious kind.

His *Version of the Canticles* appeared pretty early: which with his *Sacramental Hymns* raised his reputation for divine poesy; and occasion'd his being applied to some few years after, to revise the *Version of David's Psalms* made by that celebrated poet, Sir John Denham. This is the rather mention'd, because when the gentleman, who managed that affair, acquainted Dr. Sharpe, then Archbishop of York, with his intention, his Grace was pleas'd to say, "He had heard such a character of Mr. Stennett, that he thought no man more fit for that work than he, not only for his skill in poetry, but likewise in the Hebrew tongue."

In the reign of King William, the dissenting ministers of the different denominations in and about London address'd the throne on several occasions separately. And when the nation congratulated his Majesty on his deliverance from the Assassination plot, Mr. Stennett was fix'd on by the Baptists to draw up their address, which accordingly he did, and presented it the ninth of April 1696. being introduced by the right honorable the earl of Monmouth, now earl of Peterborow. This address was at that time much taken notice of; for which reason I shall here give the reader a copy of it, as follows.

To

To the KING's most excellent Majesty,
*The humble Address of the Ministers
 of the Baptist denomination in and
 about the city of London, in be-
 half of themselves and their re-
 spective congregations.*

May it please your Majesty,

“ **A**FTER having paid the grateful
 “ tribute of our humble thanks at
 “ the throne of the King of Kings, for
 “ that signal favour wherewith his provi-
 “ dence has blessed your Majesty, these your
 “ kingdoms, and the whole Protestant inter-
 “ est abroad, in the seasonable discovery
 “ and defeat of the late barbarous conspi-
 “ racy of the blood-thirsty enemies of
 “ your Majesty's government and life ; a
 “ life highly endear'd to us by the many
 “ successive dangers, to which your Majesty
 “ has so generously exposed it in the de-
 “ fence of all that's valuable to us ; and
 “ by those remarkable instances of the
 “ divine protection, by which it has been
 “ as often guarded : we your Majesty's most
 “ loyal and obedient subjects, with all be-
 “ coming respect, beg leave to congratulate
 “ your Majesty on this so eminent and
 “ happy deliverance.

“ And

“ And we gladly embrace this occasion
“ to assure your Majesty, that as we have
“ enjoyed a share of the benign influences
“ of your government, whereby both our
“ civil and religious liberties have been so
“ happily protected and vindicated ; so we
“ shall make it our glory (as we account
“ it our duty) to render your Majesty the
“ utmost service we are capable of in that
“ sphere, wherein the law allows us to move.
“ And as a farther testimony of our fidelity
“ and affection to your Majesty’s person
“ and government, we chearfully follow
“ the pattern of the honourable the House
“ of Commons, in subscribing the Associa-
“ tion subjoined to this our humble ad-
“ dress.

“ Nor shall we cease to offer our fervent
“ supplications to heaven, that the spirit of
“ wisdom may continue to direct all your
“ Majesty’s counsels ; that the Lord of hosts
“ may still succeed your arms ; that troops
“ of associate angels may always guard your
“ royal person ; that your Majesty may
“ have a long and prosperous reign on
“ earth, and at length wear a crown of
“ immortal glory in the kingdom of
“ heaven. So pray,

Great Sir,

Your Majesty’s most loyal
and most dutiful
subjects and servants.

In the year 1698 he was on the point of going to France, to solicit the restoration of the estate of Mr. Gill, his wife's father; who for the sake of his religion had left behind him the value of 12000 pounds sterling in lands and buildings, besides other considerable effects. Mr. Gill, upon his coming into England in 1682, had been admitted a gentleman of the Privy-chamber to King Charles II. And the Lord Preston, the English ambassador at the court of France, by his Majesty's order, had procured a brevet from the French King in Mr. Gill's favour, dated the nineteenth of April 1683, sign'd Louis, and under written *Colbert*: by which he gave him liberty to live in England with his family without any limitation of time, and to serve his Majesty of Great Britain as gentleman of his Privy-chamber; to which end he freed him from all the severity of his ordinances and declarations. But Mr. Gill's estate being afterwards seized and alienated, in direct contradiction to this brevet, it was thought proper to try if it could be recovered by the intercession of the Lord Jersey, then ambassador at that court; to whom Mr. Stennett had very considerable recommendations. His handsome address, and skill in the French language, induced some of his friends to encourage the design of his voyage. But many others thinking it too hazardous an affair for him to undertake, he was prevailed

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vailed on to desist. And it was happy for him that he did ; for several worthy persons in that Lord's retinue met with very ill treatment in France.

In the year 1700, being at Tunbridge for the use of the waters, after his recovery from a dangerous illness, he preached there during the greatest part of the season, to the general satisfaction of the audience ; which, together with his great intimacy with Mordecai Abbott Esquire, Receiver-general of the customs, very much enlarged his acquaintance. That great and good man, who passed with so much reputation thro' several considerable posts, and was so highly esteemed by King William, continued in them all a strict Nonconformist ; and was so far from being ashamed to own those with whom in religious matters he agreed, that he took all opportunities, even before persons of superior rank, to give Mr. Stennett such marks of his respect, as rendered him uneasy ; till he was convinced that Mr. Abbott did it designedly, to manifest the regard he had for his character. The death of that excellent person in the prime of his days, together with the loss of his own eldest daughter at the age of twelve years, whose great virtues and understanding had much endeared her to him, were so severe an affliction to Mr. Stennett, as had like to have proved fatal to him.

'Tis no wonder that a person of Mr. Stennett's learning and known character had so large a share in the management of affairs among the Dissenters of his own denomination; and that cases of difficulty relating to that interest from all parts of the kingdom, and some from remoter climates, came under his care.

About the year 1702, when Mr. David Ruffen published his book intitled, *Fundamentals without a foundation, or a true picture of the Anabaptists*; Mr. Stennett was prevailed on to answer him: which he soon did with so much learning and solid reasoning, that his antagonist never thought fit to make any reply. In this performance he shewed himself a thorow master of the controversy: and tho he had to do with an adversary, whose plain design was to reproach the primitive mode of baptism, and to expose the characters of those who adhered to it, as well as their principles, and who had shewn as little regard to truth as common decency; yet he conducted his answer in such a manner, as not to discover the least appearance of anger or resentment throughout the whole work, but all along maintained that easy and pleasant temper, mixed with fine turns of wit, which was so natural to him. The character he gained by this piece put his friends on soliciting him to undertake a greater work, which had been long wished for, namely, a complete History of Baptism.

This

This he intended to have performed, and was for some years collecting materials for it; but the ill state of his health prevented his making any considerable progress in it. The large extent and great usefulness of this design may in some measure appear by the following scheme, taken from a draught yet remaining in the hands of a friend of Mr. Stennett.

It was proposed, that next to the Scripture account, a particular collection should be made out of the authentic writers of the first, second, and third centuries, of every thing material relating to baptism; and a like collection from the authors of the following centuries, down to the time of the Reformation; particular care being taken to examine the books which relate to the antient Petrobusians, Albigenes, and Waldenses: that all those rabbinical books should be searched, which give any account of the baptism of proselytes among the Jews; as also such christian writers, who argue for or against it: that all christian liturgies and councils, antient or modern, should be examined with relation both to the mode and subjects of baptism: that enquiry should be made into the different sentiments of Protestants about baptism at the time of the Reformation, and particularly for a just account of the circumstances of the German and Hungarian Antipædobaptists: that all the English books

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which have controverted these points since the Reformation should be consulted, the arguments on both sides drawn out, and remarks made how the writers of the Church of England and those of the Dissenters militate with respect to paedobaptism : that a correspondence should be settled with persons of approved integrity and learning in different parts beyond the seas, to furnish such books and accounts as might give a just idea of the state of the Antipaedobaptists abroad : that assistance should be given to the author of the intended History from enquiries made by others in the several periods of it ; but that whatever materials were collected by other hands, he should himself examine all the citations, and digest them into such order as he thought fit, making proper reflections throughout the whole work. Such a plan well and judiciously executed would doubtless have set this subject in a very full and just light ; and contributed not a little to the removal of those heats and prejudices for the future, which formerly have too often appeared in discourses concerning baptism : so that it may well be esteemed an unhappiness to the public, that he did not live to finish it.

Tho he was naturally averse to disputation, yet he was several times engaged in it, and more than once in a public manner : on which occasions he seldom failed to gain the

the esteem even of his opponents. Instances of this might be given in his dispute with Mr. Penn the Quaker, Capt. Hedworth and Mr. Emms on the Unitarian points, Mr. Lefley the Nonjuror, and some among the Romanists themselves. The reverend Mr. William Wall, who had the thanks of the Convocation for his *History of Infant baptism* (which was afterwards so well and learnedly answered by Dr. John Gale) conversed with Mr. Stennett several times on the point of Baptism. And in a letter he wrote to him, speaking of some alterations, which after a conversation with him, he had made in the second edition of that *History*: "Upon reading over the sheets, says he, I could wish I had revised another place or two, where I mention you; I would, how much soever we differ, have expressed something more of respect."

When he published his *Thanksgiving sermon* for the victory at Hochstedt, in 1704, it was presented to Queen Anne by some noble hand, without his knowledge. Her Majesty having read it over, was highly pleased with the performance, and ordered him a gratuity out of the Privy-purse, with her thanks to him. But so far was he from affecting popularity, that he concealed this from many of his near friends: and perhaps, if it had not been first made known by the gentleman who was sent on the royal message, very few would ever have heard of it.

When committees of the whole body of the dissenting ministers in London were ap-
 b 4 pointed,

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pointed, he usually was one; and 'tis well known how far his judgment was regarded among them. He had commonly a considerable hand in the addresses they made to the government. One which he drew up, met with the general approbation of the body; and was presented to the Queen at Windsor, June 17, 1706, by the reverend Mr. John Spademan, introduced by the Lord Treasurer Godolphin. It had the honour to be highly commended by the Lord Chancellor Cowper: and as it was not published at large in the Gazette, it is thought the more convenient to preserve it here.

To the QUEEN's most excellent Majesty,
*The humble address of the Protestant
 Dissenting Ministers of the several
 denominations, in and about the
 cities of London and Westminster.*

May it please your Majesty,

“ **T**HE late surprising progress of your
 “ Majesty's forces, and those of your
 “ allies in Flanders, under the command of
 “ the most illustrious Prince the Duke of
 “ Marlborough; and of those in Spain,
 “ commanded by the noble Earls of Peter-
 “ borough and Gallway, happily supported
 “ by your royal navy, under the conduct
 “ of your prudent and valiant Admirals,
 “ engages us humbly to congratulate your
 “ Majesty on so glorious an occasion.

“ The

“ The signal answer it has pleased God
“ to return to those devout prayers, which
“ your Majesty, and your people by your
“ direction, addressed to heaven, inspires
“ us with a joy, equal to the mortification
“ it gives your enemies. And while your
“ Majesty ascribes your many victories to
“ the arm of the Almighty, and repeats
“ your royal commands to your people, to
“ offer him solemn thanksgivings ; we can-
“ not but look on your Majesty’s piety as an
“ hopeful pledge of the like future success.

“ As the important consequences of your
“ Majesty’s triumphs make a daily accession
“ to your glory ; so they give us an agree-
“ able prospect of the speedy reduction of
“ the power of France to its just limits,
“ the restitution of liberty and peace to
“ Europe, the effectual relief of the Re-
“ formed churches abroad, and the security
“ of that provision the law has made for a
“ Protestant succession to the crown of this
“ kingdom.

“ We gratefully acknowledge the share
“ we have in the blessings of your Majesty’s
“ auspicious reign, which preserves to us
“ both our civil and religious liberties ; and
“ take this occasion to renew to your Ma-
“ jesty the assurance of our inviolable fide-
“ lity ; to which not only our interest and
“ inclination, but the sacred ties of grati-
“ tude and conscience, oblige us. And we
“ shall use our utmost endeavours, in our se-
“ veral stations, to promote that union and
“ moderation among your Protestant subjects,
“ so

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“ so often recommended by your Majesty, as
“ highly necessary to the common safety.

“ May the divine providence, that has
“ made your Majesty not only head of the
“ Protestant interest, but chief in the Con-
“ federacy for the glorious cause of com-
“ mon liberty, give your Majesty the satisf-
“ faction of seeing both more firmly esta-
“ blished than ever, by the influence of
“ your councils, and success of your arms.
“ May your Majesty’s exemplary piety,
“ zeal for the reformation of manners,
“ and parental care of all your people, even
“ those of the remotest colonies, be emi-
“ nently rewarded by the great God with
“ the constant prosperity of your govern-
“ ment. May your reign be honoured with
“ an happy Union of your two kingdoms of
“ Great Britain. May your royal consort
“ the Prince enjoy a confirmed health. May
“ your Majesty continue to rule in the hearts
“ of your people, and be late advanced to
“ a throne of glory in the kingdom of hea-
“ ven. So pray

Your Majesty’s most loyal and
most obedient subjects and servants.

Mr. Stennett’s character being now so well known, he wanted not for such temptations, as considering he had a large family, and little to support it, might have been thought capable of prevailing, if he had not been very steady to the principles he professed. He had several considerable offers made him in the established Church,

Church, if he would have conformed. And a late eminent Prelate once said to an intimate friend of Mr. Stennett, "That if
" he could but be reconciled to the Church,
" not many preferments in it, he believed,
" would be thought above his merit." But how little impression such proposals made on him, appears from what he said on one of those occasions to a friend of his yet alive:
" That he blessed God, he could hardly allow these things to be called temptations,
" because he never felt in his mind the least disposition to enter into any treaty
" with them."

At a critical juncture of public affairs, when the Parliament was called in the year 1708, it was the opinion of many eminent citizens, with the approbation of several noble and zealous assertors of the English liberties, that a paper of advice presented by the citizens of London to their representatives would be very seasonable. Mr. Stennett's pen was made choice of for this service; which he performed with a spirit so becoming the persons in whose name it was written, and with so decent a regard to the characters of those gentlemen to whom it was directed, as render it worthy of being preserved, tho' for some reasons it was not presented. The paper is as follows.

GENTLEMEN,

“ **A**S you have the honour to be chosen to represent this great city in the ensuing Parliament ; so 'tis hoped it will not be disagreeable to you to know the sense of the generality of your electors concerning the present posture of public affairs, and after what manner 'tis expected you will acquit yourselves of the trust reposed in you.

“ 'Tis your fortune to be chosen at a very critical juncture of time : and the august assembly, of which you are to be a part, will in all appearance have before them some of the most important affairs that ever were debated in Parliament ; on the prudent management of which (under the divine providence) not only the happiness of this city and nation, but the welfare of the whole Protestant interest, and of the greatest part of Europe depends.

“ All the world is convinced of the truth of that, which her Majesty has so justly observed ; that the late insolent attempt of the Pretender must needs have been encouraged by secret enemies of the government here at home : and their party appears too considerable to be either despised, or neglected ; which renders it highly probable

“ ble, that a British Parliament will think
“ it necessary to enquire into the hidden
“ springs of that wicked and bloody design;
“ that by detecting the treason of our in-
“ testine enemies, and by bringing the
“ chief of them to justice, the rest may
“ not flatter themselves that they may
“ commit the blackest crimes with impu-
“ nity; and that their confederates abroad,
“ by observing the strength and steddiness
“ of the British government, may be dis-
“ couraged from engaging in the like
“ presumptuous enterprizes for time to
“ come.

“ We therefore rely on your integrity
“ and zeal, that when the plot, on which
“ the intended invasion was founded,
“ comes to be examined, you will contri-
“ bute all you can to the discovery of
“ that treachery, and concur with those
“ prudent measures, which the wisdom of
“ the nation shall think fit to take for the
“ security of her Majesty's person and go-
“ vernment from such horrid conspiracies
“ for the future.

“ A seasonable and nice scrutiny into
“ this dark affair will probably bring to
“ light some of the mysterious causes of
“ those uncommon difficulties, under which
“ the government has so much laboured; and
“ may open a way to some proper method
“ for the revival and security of trade:
“ which is an article the representatives of
“ this

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“ this city can never forget, without being
“ guilty of a negligence and supineness not
“ to be forgiven.

“ Therefore we cannot omit to charge
“ you with the necessary care of making
“ in Parliament a full and lively representation of the calamities we have long suffered, sometimes for want of convoys
“ and cruisers, sometimes by their unaccountable delays, and the unseasonable time
“ of their sailing, as well as by the undue
“ pressing of men out of our merchant
“ ships; by which our trade has been almost entirely ruined, and her Majesty’s
“ revenue very much diminished.

“ We moreover earnestly desire you
“ would embrace every occasion, that may
“ offer in a parliamentary way, to consolidate the happy Union of England and
“ Scotland, and to render it as complete
“ as possible: for you cannot be ignorant how much the welfare of Great
“ Britain, and indeed of all Europe, is
“ concerned in the keeping of that Union
“ inviolable; and how much the confirmation of it will tend to mortify all
“ those, who wish ill to our happy constitution.

“ And how much soever peace is to be
“ desired, especially after a long and expensive war; yet ’tis so very evident, that
“ ’tis impossible for the balance of power
“ in Europe to be preserved, and the trade
“ of

“ of this nation to be retrieved, without re-
“ ducing the exorbitant power of France
“ to just limits, and restoring the crown
“ of Spain to the house of Austria; that we
“ think it much more eligible to bear the
“ burden of a just and necessary war, than
“ weakly to fall into the obvious snare of
“ a dishonourable and destructive peace.
“ We hope therefore you will do all that
“ becomes our representatives to support
“ the glorious cause of liberty, in which
“ her Majesty and the nation are engaged,
“ till peace can be attained on honourable
“ and lasting terms, according to the una-
“ nimous resolution of the late Parlia-
“ ment.

“ We conclude in assuring you, that if
“ you are desirous to oblige us, you can
“ do it in nothing so much, as in shewing
“ a forward zeal for the vindication of her
“ Majesty’s rightful and lawful title to
“ the crown (a title founded on the just
“ and glorious principles of the late happy
“ Revolution) and for the security of the
“ succession in the Protestant line; and
“ in readily complying with all such mea-
“ sures as shall be thought proper to pro-
“ mote union and moderation among Pro-
“ testants, and to render them all as easy
“ to one another, as useful to the com-
“ munity, and as serviceable to the go-
“ vernment as possible. And all this we
“ give you in charge, as you will answer
“ the

“ the neglect of it to God, to your own
“ consciences, to her Majesty, to the na-
“ tion in general, and in particular to the
“ city you represent.

“ And now, Gentlemen, we promise
“ ourselves that your constant attendance
“ in your places in the House of Com-
“ mons, your assiduous application to the
“ public business, and your peculiar regard
“ to all the important matters we have
“ recommended to you, will confirm us in
“ the good opinion we have of your fide-
“ lity, and the other qualifications necessary
“ to the discharge of so great a trust as
“ that of our civil and religious liberties;
“ the preservation and security of which
“ we commit to your care.”

When the scene of affairs altered towards the latter end of the reign of Queen Anne, it happened that a noble friend of Mr. Stennett fell in with the change: and as many addresses waited on her Majesty with congratulations on the peace concluded with France, so great endeavours were used to engage the Dissenters to compliment the Queen and her ministers on this occasion. And when they could not in their united circumstances be prevailed on, it was thought proper to try if any of the Denominations singly could be brought into those measures.

That

That noble Lord, with the assistance of another noble Peer, was employed to try what could be done with the Baptists. Mr. Stennett was presently sent for ; and it was presumed that if they gained him, a considerable step would be made towards effecting the design. Some things were insinuated to him, which tended to create a diffidence between the Baptists and the other bodies of Dissenters ; and he was assured at the same time, that such an acceptable compliance as this with the expectations of the court from him and his brethren, would bring them highly into the royal esteem, and secure them any favour they could reasonably expect. But he assured their Lordships, that neither himself nor his brethren could ever be brought to justify with their hands, what their hearts disapproved ; and that no particular advantages to themselves could ever counterbalance their regards to their country.

Robert Harley Esquire, afterwards Earl of Oxford, attempted at the same time with powerful insinuations to influence Dr. Williams ; but met with a brave and steady repulse. And the Whig Lords deputed a noble Earl, who then bore a principal figure among them, but is since dead, to make due acknowledgments for this seasonable stand of the Dissenters.

Mr.

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Mr. Stennett had indeed a truly public spirit; and was not only continually engaged in promoting the interests of religion and the good of his country in his own time, but likewise solicitously concerned for future generations. With this view he industriously endeavoured to promote such measures, as he thought most likely to supply the churches with a succession of useful ministers. It was greatly wished by many, that he could have had leisure and health enough to employ some part of his time in fitting young persons for this work; for which his piety, learning, and excellent temper so abundantly qualified him. But his other public engagements were more than his bodily strength could well bear, and would not admit of his undertaking such an affair as this. For his constitution was naturally weak; and the extraordinary application of his mind to study in his younger years is thought to have laid the foundation of those disorders, which attended him all the after part of his life, and deprived the world so soon of such a valuable blessing. However, towards the latter part of his time several young gentlemen, who were designed for the ministry, boarded at his house, for the advantage of his conversation and direction in their studies; and he failed not in the midst of all his other engagements to afford them very considerable assistance.

Many

Many young ministers likewise resorted to him for his advice. And his judgment as a divine was so considerable, such his knowledge of mankind, and serious concern about religion, and such the candour with which he treated them; that it is easy to judge of the profit and pleasure they received by consulting him. To give one instance of his many prudent counsels: he advised, that when they proposed to discourse upon any text of Scripture, they should, after seeking the divine assistance, first consult their own unbiassed thoughts, by a close study of the text itself, compared with what goes before or follows after, and with other parts of Scripture relating to it, before they looked into any commentator. By this means, he observed, confusion of thoughts would be avoided, and their minds prepared to judge of the propriety of those explications or illustrations, which they should afterwards meet with in the works of learned men; but without such a conduct they would seldom be able to say or write any thing, which they could justly call their own.

In the beginning of the year 1713 his health apparently declined. Many heavy afflictions at that time crowded upon him, which affected him more than ordinary, tho he had been used to various trials during the whole course of his life, and had a temper of mind fitted for such exercises. During his illness he lost his dear friend, the reverend

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Mr. John Piggott, with whom he had lived in a constant and most intimate friendship for many years. His *Funeral Sermon*, which has been highly esteemed by the best judges, was the last Mr. Stennett preached : in which he has given a just character of that valuable person. He intended a poem likewise to his memory, and made some progress in it : but his weakness, which was followed by his death, prevented his completing it. This piece, unfinished as it was, would probably have been acceptable to the public : but it is unhappily lost, except a small fragment, printed among his poems.

Being advised by his physicians to remove into the air, he went to Knaphill in Buckinghamshire, the house of his brother-in-law, Mr. Morton. Here he declined apace : and his honoured friend Dr. Mead being consulted, who had formerly been exceeding kind and serviceable to him in a dangerous disorder, he soon discovered by the account sent him that he was past all hope of recovery ; which soon after proved to be fatally true.

When he drew near his dissolution, he called his children about him, and in a particular manner gave his dying advice to his eldest son, with respect to the management of his studies, and the conduct of his future life : and having charged upon them all a due obedience to their mother, he pressed them in a special manner to a proper concern
for

for their souls; declaring to them with the greatest assurance, and a pleasant smile in his countenance, "That if they were found walking in the ways of true religion, his God would be their God, to whose providence he could in faith commit them." He likewise signified to several about him, in a calm and sedate manner, a firm and well grounded hope of a blessed condition in the eternal world. And to one in particular, who asked him in what disposition his mind was, under his low state of body, and in the prospect of his great change: "I rejoice, said he, in the God of my salvation, who is my strength and my God." Thus he gradually sunk away; and slept in the Lord on the eleventh of July 1713, and in the forty ninth year of his age.

His active mind was indeed removed out of a weak and crazy tabernacle, from which it had often groaned for a release; and he left a world of labours, cares, and many sorrows. But the loss of a person endowed with such valuable accomplishments, and so useful to the world, just in the maturity of his years, was an unspeakable affliction to his friends, and greatly lamented by all the lovers of learning and virtue who were acquainted with him; several of whom came from London and other parts, to attend his body to the grave, in the church-yard of Hitchenden in the county of Bucks, where it waits for the resurrection of the just **12 JY 62**

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I shall finish this account with the following epitaph to the memory of Mr. Stennett, drawn up by one of his friends.

M. S.

IOSEPHI STENNETT THEOLOGI INSIGNIS
 PRAECLARIS ET INGENII ET ERVDITIONIS DOTIBVS ORNATI
 QVIBVS ETIAM TANTA PIETAS A PRIMIS ACCESSIT ANNIS
 VT VTRVM DOCTOR AN MELIOR VIR ESSET
 AMBIGVVM RELIQUERIT
 IN REBVS DIVINIS VERSATISSIMVS
 OMNES SACRI MVNERIS PARTES CVRATISSIME PEREGIT
 FIDEMQVE CHRISTIANAM CVM VITAE INTEGRITATE CONIUNCTAM
 HAVD MINORI DILIGENTIA SVO EXEMPLO EXORNARE CONATVS
 QVAM STVDIO ET ELOQVENTIA ALIORVM APPROBATIONI
 TAM CONCIONIBVS QVAM SCRIPTIS COMMENDARE
 MVSAS ETIAM QVAS PIE CASTEQVE COLVIT
 AD DIVINI AMORIS LAVDES MAGNIQVE REDEMPTORIS SACRA CELEBRANDIS
 EA QUA POLLEBAT ARTE ADHIBUIT
 AT NIHIL HVMANVM A SE ALIENVM EXISTIMANS
 NEC DE REBVS QVOQVE CIVILIBVS OMNINO CVRAM ABIECIT
 SED PROVT OCCASIO POSTVLARET
 AVT APVD PRINCIPEM GRATVLANDI CAUSA ORATOREM EGIT
 AVT IVRA PVBLICA ET LIBERTATEM SCRIPTIS VINDICAVIT
 QVANQVAM AVTEM SEMPER DE SE MODESTE ADMODVM SENSERIT
 BONOSQVE OMNES AMORE SIT AMPLEXVS
 QVAE IN SACRIS TAMEN LITERIS PRAESCRIPTA IVDICAVIT
 NVLLO NEQVE COMMODO NEQVE HONORE SVO POTVIT ADDVCI
 QVO MINVS CONSTANTER EIS ADHAERERET
 NATVS A. D. MDCLXIII ABENDONIAE IN AGRO BERCHENSIS
 LONDINVM SE CONTVLIT ANNO MDCLXXXV
 VBI TRIENNIO POST VXOREM DVXIT SVSANNAM GILL
 PIA ET HONESTA STIRPE PROGENITAM
 CIVIS PATER GALLIAM NATALE SOLVM
 MAGNASQVE ILLIC FACVLTATES RELIGIONIS CAUSA RELIQUERAT
 DEINCEPS ANNO MDCXC AD SACRVM PASTORIS OFFICIVM COOPTATVS
 GREGEM FIDEI SVAE COMMISSVM
 VIGILANTER PASCERE ET CVSTODIRE PERSEVERAVIT
 DONEC STVDIIS ET LABORIBVS CVRRARVMQVE MOLE OPPRESSVS
 EX VITA DISCEDENS IN CHRISTO PLACIDE OBDORMIVIT
 V ID. IVLII A. D. MDCCXIII AETATIS SVAE XLIX
 VIDVA ET QVATVOR LIBERIS SVPERSTITIBVS SIBI RELICTIS

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Lately publish'd,

SERMONS preach'd by the late Reverend and
Learned Dr. **JOHN GALE**. To which is pre-
fix'd his Life. ▀

Reflections on Mr. *Wall's* History of Infant-Baptism.
In several Letters to a Friend. By the same Author.

The



The reasonableness and advantages of an early conversion to God demonstrated.

S E R M O N I.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.



OW much soever the thoughts of youth are busied with the amusing entertainment of the many sensible objects that accost them, and thereby rendered unapt for any serious reflections on the vanity of the world, and on the excellency and happiness of a spiritual and

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heavenly conversation; yet when reason, experience, and religion, all conspire to bespeak their attention (as they do in our text, and indeed in this whole book) one might well expect that many would have the justice, or prudence, or at least the curiosity, to give three such monitors a hearing.

When a prince excelling all other men in wisdom, and other monarchs in wealth and splendor, has so much charity for mankind as to turn a *preacher*^a; who would not be ambitious to become his *auditor*? The news of his wisdom and grandeur drew the queen of Sheba *from the utmost parts of the earth*^b, to become an immediate and admiring witness of what she had before, at a distance, and but imperfectly heard: fame it self, which uses so mightily to inhanse the glory of other princes, having, it seems, detracted from his; which so far exceeded the common standard, that it was but faintly represented by those encomiums, which might have been justly counted strained hyperboles, when applied to others. Who would not then at least so far imitate that generous prince, as to recollect his roving thoughts from the ends of the earth, whither they are prone to wander, to fix them on a subject, which the great and wise Solomon recommends to youth with the greatest advantage of reason, and strength of argument? Curiosity, if no other conside-

^a Eccl. 1.

^b 1 Kings 10.

ration should, would undoubtedly prompt many to desire, with the queen of the south, to hear his wise speeches, if he were now alive, and to that end to undergo the charge and fatigue of a tedious journey: ought we not then to put a high value on his writings, wherein we have that very sense, which so much astonished his hearers, when he spake to them; and by which, as it is said of Abel, *being dead, he yet speaks to us*^c? Nor have we need to traverse the mighty waters to hear him, or to say, as Moses speaks concerning the law, *Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring his words to us, that we may hear them, and do them*^d? seeing they are so very near us in the divine treatises he has written.

And as his extraordinary knowledg promises us much, so his large experience may justly raise our expectation still higher. This makes a man speak more feelingly, and with more demonstration. Besides, 'tis not only the experience of a man endow'd with a vast stock of wisdom and good sense, who consequently was able to make very curious and exact remarks on the event of things; but of one, who by the advantage of his elevated station in the world, and of his immense riches, was also capable of furnishing himself with whatever the world could yield, or his large curiosity desire^e. And tho it was his great unhappiness and sin *to give his heart to*

^c Heb. 11. 4.

^d Deut. 30. 13, 14.

^e Eccles. 2. 4—10.

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know *madness and folly*, after that criminal manner he confesses he did ^f; yet even this may make way for his advice: since he that here decries a loose and sensual, and commends a strict and virtuous course of life, is one, who had thorowly tried what pleasures the world could afford; and upon a just estimate pronounces them all not only *vanity*, but *vexation of spirit*, at the beginning of this book; and at the latter end of it, from his happier experience of the worth and sweetness of a religious life, recommends it as the only way to happiness ^g. So that since these thoughts are the result not only of his speculation, but of his experience too, and that an experience so dearly bought, at the expence of so much thought and invention, unhappily employ'd in *making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof* ^h; of so much time and treasure; and, which is infinitely more, at the expence of his innocence and peace of conscience, and this with the great and apparent hazard of his soul: how much does it behove those that are young to become wise at his cost, and to attend to the testimony of his experience, as well as to the evidence of his reason?

But we have not only the wisest man in the world giving us rules in a matter of the greatest weight, and confirming them with

^f Eccl. 1. 17. Chap. 2. 1, 3, | ^g Eccl. 12. 13.
&c. | ^h Rom. 13. 14.

Serm. I. of an early conversion. 5

the *probatum est* of a very large and long experience; for, *behold, a greater than Solomon is here*ⁱ. The wisest of men *wrote* this book, but the spirit of wisdom *inspired* it^k. If then all the advantageous characters of Solomon should not much influence the minds of young persons to regard his admonitions; yet the authority of the Holy Spirit himself, whose dictates these originally are, lays a strict obligation on them to observe them, as his own divine counsels, with a religious zeal, and to respect them as his precepts, with an awful reverence.

To form in our minds a just idea of the general drift and design of this book, 'tis proper to observe, that as 'tis natural for man to seek to be happy, and therefore the philosophers of all ages, and of all nations, have given rules according to their sense of things, for the obtaining this great end; we have Solomon, a very philosophical prince, and who of all others deserves best to be term'd the prince of philosophers, giving in this book the history of himself, with respect to the method he took in the pursuit of happiness; recounting to us his false steps for our warning, and at last making the end, and duty, and interest of man, all to consist in the service and fear of God: which seems to be compris'd in the close of this book, in those words: *Let us hear the conclusion of the*

ⁱ Mat. 12. 42.

^k 2 Tim. 3. 16.

6 *The reasonableness and advantages*

*whole matter, fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man*¹: where if we leave out the word *duty*, which is not found in the original, more scope is given to the words, *this is the whole of man*, *q. d.* his whole duty, end, and interest. So that while he is looking back with regret on the loss of his own time, and with a penitential sorrow reflects on the sins of his youth, he earnestly admonishes others to beware in time of the rock on which he split; to be warn'd of taking a wrong course by his fall; to be persuaded to take a right one by his repentance; and, as an excellent mean conducing to both their present and future happiness, to devote themselves, as soon as possible, to the service of God, or, in the words of our text, to *remember their creator in the days of their youth*.

For our better understanding of which words, order directs us to take notice of those in the two last verses of the foregoing chapter, on which they have an immediate dependance; where the wise man seems to obviate an objection, which some, especially those whose youthful heat prompts them to pursue the pleasures of the world, would raise against his past discourse, which so much depreciates them. If such should say, his morals are too severe; he answers them, chap. 11. ver. 9. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days*

¹ Ch. 12. 13.

of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: which, according to some, is a concession of a moderate use of worldly pleasures, and may be thus paraphras'd: "Imagine not, O
" *young man, that I pretend to make it a*
" *crime for thee to be chearful in the use of*
" *the good things of this life, which the pro-*
" *vidence of God allots thee: no; gratify*
" *the desires of thy heart, and entertain thy*
" *eyes and other senses with variety of plea-*
" *sant objects, provided a due moderation be*
" *observ'd in all these things, so that thou*
" *use, and not abuse them*^m*; for an account*
" *of thy management of them must be ren-*
" *dered before the just tribunal of the al-*
" *mighty. I do not bid thee renounce the*
" *joys and comforts of this life; but know*
" *thou, that for all these things God will bring*
" *thee into judgment: I therefore caution*
" *thee of the danger of being insnar'd by an*
" *inordinate desire of them."*

Others interpret these words as an ironical permission, whereby the absurdity of the wild maxims, and extravagant sayings, with which young persons are wont to encourage themselves and others to persist in a vitious course, are expos'd; and a serious caution thereupon subjoin'd. "Youth, say they, is
" the time of life most fitted for pleasure and
" joy, the senses are then most lively and

^m 1 Cor. 7. 31.

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“impressible; and as a multitude of charming
 “ing objects are continually inviting us, so
 “our own inclinations are prompting us to
 “embrace them. Now therefore is the time
 “for us to abandon our selves to mirth and
 “pleasure.” Well, says Solomon, *Rejoice, O
 young man, &c. q. d.* “Take thy own course,
 “give up thy self to the conduct of thy be-
 “loved lusts, take thy fill of jollity and plea-
 “sure; but mark the consequence, be assur’d
 “that for this course of life, if obstinately
 “persisted in, the great and just God will
 “judg and condemn thee to eternal pains;
 “know thou, that for all these things God will
 “bring thee into judgment.”

Which last sense seems to me most genuine,
 not only because we have several examples
 of this ironical way of speaking in the holy
 scripture; as that saying of our blessed Saviour
 to his disciples, *Sleep on now, and take your
 restⁿ*, seems to be, both from the reproof
 for sleeping, and exhortation to watchfulness,
 which he had given them just before^o; and
 from the alarm he gives them, not to indulge
 their drowsiness, but to *rise and be going*,
 for the reason he assigns^p just after those
 words: and that of the prophet Micajah to
 king Ahab, who enquired of him, whether he
 should go up against Ramoth-Gilead^q, *Go
 and prosper, &c.*^r whereby he assumes the

ⁿ Mat. 26. 45.

^o Ver. 40, 41.

^p Ver. 45, 46.

^q 1 Kings 22. 15.

^r Ver. 12.

language of the false prophets; but afterwards explains himself in express terms, *If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me*¹. Not only do such examples as these, I say, justify this sense of the words last given; but that which seems especially to make it preferable to the former is, that those phrases, in the sentence we are examining, of *walking in the way of one's heart, and in the sight of one's eyes*, cannot be easily accommodated to a moderate use of worldly enjoyments, as the former sense supposes, seeing it is evident, they are used to quite another purpose in the scripture, by that prohibition God gave the Israelites, *not to seek after their own heart, and their own eyes*²; and by the curse Job imprecates on himself, *if his heart had walked after his eyes*³; both which shew, that *to walk after one's heart and eyes*, is an expression more fairly applicable to a dissolute and sinful course of life, than to a temperate use of lawful pleasures.

After this ironical permission of sinful pleasures, and the serious premonition of judgment subjoin'd to it, follows a conclusion in these terms: *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth are vanity*⁴.

Which some will have to be a continuation of the irony, and, if taken in a proper sense,

¹ Ver. 17, 18. See also 1 Kings 18. 27. Ezek. 28. 3, 4. | ² Job. 31. 7.
³ Num. 15. 39. | ⁴ Eccl. 11. 10.

to speak the language of those libertines, who notwithstanding what he had before said, would still devote themselves to the pleasures of sin. As if he should say, "Cast away (as you resolve to do) all serious thoughts; fly the occasions of trouble and sorrow, as much as possible; avoid whatever is ungrateful to flesh and blood: for time is fleeting, childhood and youth, those opportunities of delight and pleasure, will soon vanish, therefore the sweets they afford must be reap'd in their season." For thus do some sensualists argue for the present and earnest pursuit of worldly pleasures, from their vanity in respect of the shortness of their continuance; which ought rather, when their eternal ill consequences are considered, to take off the edge of the appetite toward them. So the prophet, and after him the apostle introduces them arguing: *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall die* ^v.

But it seems not so likely that the irony should be reiterated after so express and serious a warning of judgment, as that in the former verse, especially seeing this is joined to it by the word *therefore*, as a conclusion founded thereupon: *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, &c.*

I should rather therefore give the words such a turn as this, viz. *Seeing God will bring thee to judgment, therefore remove sorrow, &c.*

^v Isa. 22. 13. 1 Cor. 15. 32.

q. d. "Mix innocence with thy joy; be merry and wise; reform thy life, and a good conscience shall be to thee a continual feast^w. The evil of sorrow need not possess thy heart, if the evil of sin be extirpated from thy flesh: govern thy body with temperance and chastity, and joy shall reign in thy soul."

Or, as others will have it, *Remove anger from thy heart*, (for so the word ^x, here translated *sorrow*, properly signifies) *q. d.* "Be not angry with them that advise thee well; or, be not displeas'd with God for the strictness of his precepts, which I recommend to thee, or for the severity of his judgments, of which I warn thee."

Or else the passion of anger, because it so violently agitates the soul, may be put for all the vicious affections of the mind, and then the meaning of the words is; *Remove all sinful passions from thy mind, and put away evil from thy flesh*: *q. d.* "Give not the members of thy body to the service of sin^y."

Which exhortation is urg'd by this reason, *for childhood and youth are vanity*; *q. d.* "These pleasures, thou art so hotly in chase of now, will vanish and disappear together with thy youth, which is a flower that soon fades; and why shouldst thou, for short-liv'd joys, expose thy soul to the hazard of eternal misery?"

^w Prov. 15. 15. טוב לב
^x כעס

| ^y Rom. 6. 19.

Or else the sense of the wise man may be to this purpose: "I have reason to admonish those that are young of the evil and danger of a sensual life, because none are so prone to be insnared by its charms as they, whose imaginations, words, and actions are generally so vain, that they may be fitly term'd vanity it self, vanity in the abstract; *for childhood and youth are vanity.*"

Upon which he adds a suitable exhortation to such, in the words of our text, which are connected to those above with a particle, which in our translation is render'd *now*², but is no adverb of time, but commonly signifies *and*, and so may be joined to what he had advised before, *viz. Put away evil from thy flesh, and remember thy creator*; putting this sentence, *for childhood and youth are vanity*, in a parenthesis between those two instructions. Or else it may be render'd *then*, or *therefore*, and so is an inference from the premises; *q. d.* "If there is a time of judgment to be expected, and *childhood and youth are vanity*; then it concerns such *to remember their creator, &c.*"

In which words we have three things to consider.

First, a duty enjoined or exhorted to.

Secondly, the special time of engaging in the performance of this duty prescribed.

Thirdly, the reasons of it intimated.

I. The duty exhorted to is, *Remember thy creator.*

II. The special time of engaging in this duty is signified :

1. In exprefs terms, *In the days of thy youth.*

2. By an opposite periphrasis, which contains a description of old age, *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them, i. e. before the approach of old age.*

III. The reasons hereof are couched and insinuated :

1. In the terms of the duty set before us, where the relation we stand in to God, as he is our creator, implies the obligation we are under to remember him, and that *in our youth.*

2. In the terms used to signify the proper time of this duty ; where the fitness of the season of youth for entering one's self into the service of God, and the disadvantage of deferring it to old age, are suggested.

Of these we shall treat severally in their order.

I. To explain the duty to which we are exhorted, we shall consider,

1. the object of it, namely our creator ; and we shall endeavour to shew what
is

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is included in that title here attributed to God:

2. The act it self, of remembering, what it imports.

1. We are to enquire what is included in this title of creator, here attributed to God.

(1.) It plainly and expressly declares, that God is the author and original of the being of man. And may also include,

(2.) That he is the upholder and preserver of our being.

(3.) That he is the restorer and reformer of man.

(4.) That he is the sovereign arbiter and disposer of our being.

(1.) God is our creator, as he is the original and author of our being: for

[1.] He created the matter of which we are composed, as well as that of all the other parts of the universe. All beings of which the world consists, all that we have any notices of, either from reason or scripture, are either spiritual or corporeal, and all these are the works of God. Now man is a creature compounded of both these kinds of being; his soul is a spirit, and his body is a material substance: and both these constituent parts of mankind were created by God the author of the whole universe.

And here we consider the term *create* in its strictest sense, namely, the giving a being to that which had none before, the producing

producing of something out of nothing, *i. e.* without any preexistent matter to work upon.

Now it must be granted that the soul and body of man either are from eternity, or else had a beginning in time; and if they had a beginning, that it must be either from themselves, or from some other being inferior to God, or from God himself.

I shall therefore briefly prove, both from reason and scripture, that they are not eternal, but had a beginning; and this not of themselves, nor of any other being but God himself, as our text imports, by styling him our creator.

1.) Our substance is not from eternity: there is no plausible colour for such a wild conceit, seeing there are no characters of eternity engraven on our souls, the nobler part of man; much less are there any vestiges of it imprinted on that clay, of which our bodies are composed.

The memory we have of our own existence, extends but to a very few years; therefore we cannot pretend, that we remember ourselves to have been from eternity; nor has any eternal being revealed to us that our substance is eternal, tho we knew it not, or had forgotten it. And is it likely that a being, to which thinking is essential, should have so excellent a property as to exist eternally, and yet labour under so great a defect, as the entire oblivion of its own eternal duration?

Is it to be imagin'd that if the minds of men had been eternal, there would have been any room left for those many new and great improvements of arts and sciences, which have been so often seen in the world? how could past eternity be so deficient, as to leave any thing to future invention to discover or cultivate? Is it probable that our knowledg, even of things much inferior to our selves, would be so inconsiderable as it is, and that the vilest insect, nay the most despicable portion of inanimate matter, should so puzzle the most speculative and ingenious minds, that enquire into their nature, if those minds were from eternity? is it not much more reasonable to conclude, that *we are* yesterday, because we know nothing? And can it be thought that a being that wanted no cause for its existence, should need a cause to give it properties far below that of eternity? that a being which cannot be measured by time, should yet be liable to so many changes and troubles, as we see the souls of men are continually exposed to?

And if the soul cannot justly claim this property; how can the body, which consists of dull unactive matter, and wants those lesser qualities which the soul possesses, be imagined to have that greater excellency of eternity, to which the soul her self cannot reasonably pretend?

• Job 8. 9.

No

No—this is the divine prerogative, and is not to be attributed to any other being than the supreme; who calls himself, *I AM*^b, *i. e.* being in the abstract, being it self; and *JEHOVAH*, *i. e.* the eternal one; *who only hath immortality*^c in this absolute sense, and of whom alone it can be said, *He is from everlasting to everlasting*^d.

For what is eternal is infinite and independent. Infinite in duration: for that which had no cause to produce it does necessarily exist; and that which necessarily exists is infinitely durable, and independent by the same reason: and that which is independent, and infinite in duration, may be justly accounted infinite in all other respects, and so infinitely perfect; which is the sole prerogative of God, and incommunicable to any being inferior to him.

It therefore follows, that we had once no being; that our souls and bodies, as well as all other beings, except God, had a beginning.

And if we had a beginning,

2.) We could not be the authors of our own being; we could not give our selves a being before we had being. Nothing can be thought on more absurd, than that nothing, which cannot act in any sense, should be capable of creating. That *nothing is made of nothing*^e, if taken in this sense, is a true

^b Exod. 3. 14.

^c 1 Tim. 6. 16.

^d Psal. 90. 2. Isa. 63. 16.

^e Ex nihilo nihil fit.

maxim, *viz.* that nothing can make its no-self to be ; but is not to be construed so as to exempt God, whose power is infinite, from being able to make a being, which did not exist before. And,

3.) No other being, except God, could make us, or any thing else, out of nothing : for how can less than an infinite power transport any thing from nullity to existence, seeing there is an infinite distance betwixt them ? as appears, in that, if you multiply nothing to infinity, it will never mount to any real being ; and if in thought you diminish any thing that exists to the lowest degree of being imaginable, you can never make it appear a mere nothing. This distance therefore being infinite, it must needs be proper only to an infinite power, to make that exist which is not yet in being ; as it must needs be only the withdrawment of that power from supporting the being of a creature, that can annihilate it.

Besides, if no being, that has had a beginning, could give it self existence, and all things inferior to God had a beginning, as we have prov'd ; then no being inferior to him could make us exist : for how should that, which does neither necessarily exist, nor could give it self a being, be capable of giving being to any thing else, when it wholly depends on God for its own ?

And as being, simply consider'd, is the most universal effect, all creatures partaking
 I of

of it in common; it must be owing to the most universal cause, which is no other than God himself: therefore he only can create, or make that to be which was not before.

Nor have we only the light of reason in this case; but that of divine revelation too, which assures us, that *in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*^f, i. e. the whole universe. He made the first matter, out of which this curious fabric was built; he made the earth, which was without form and void^g; and then raised a beautiful structure out of it. *Thro' faith*, as well as reason, *we understand that the worlds were fram'd by the word of God, so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear*^h.

[2.] As God is the author of the matter of which we consist; so is he also of our form and composition, as well as of that of the rest of the universe. It was a vain supposition of Aristotle, that this frame of the world had no beginning, and consequently that the species of mankind has existed from eternity. This fancy has been sufficiently disprov'd by the reasons before alledg'd against the eternity of the first matter of the world; for if that be not eternal, much less can the form of it be so.

Nor is the Epicurean whimsy less absurd, which supposes, that from a fortuitous shuffling of an infinite number of self-exist-

^f Gen. 1. 1.

^g Ver. 2.

^h Heb. 11. 3.

ent, and self-moving atoms, this stately frame of the world did emerge; and that mankind, and all other animals, sprung out of the earth by such a casual way of generation as this. As if dead matter could move it self, and as if the collision of material particles could produce a substance capable of reasoning and judging, willing and desiring, such as the soul of man is. And what can be more absurd than to imagine, that the accidental motions of those minute particles could frame the curious structure of a human body; nay the whole system of the universe, and every species in it? 'Tis less unreasonable to imagine, when one sees a magnificent palace, that it was built by the casual jumbling together of the materials that compose it; or that the most curious watch was fram'd after this odd manner; that an elegant picture may have resulted from the accidental and unheeded mixture of colours; or an elaborate oration or poem, as many have observ'd, from a confus'd shuffling of the letters of the alphabet.

'Tis evident from the harmonious combination of the several parts of the world, and the curious frame of each species in it, and particularly of mankind, that all has been dispos'd in number, weight and measure, by the infinite wisdom and power of that God, who is *wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working*ⁱ.

ⁱ Isa. 28. 29.

And this truth is so very clear, that the minds of the generality of the heathens themselves have been penetrated with the light of it. And therefore the apostle Paul cites to the Athenians one of their celebrated authors, to prove, what others of them generally confess'd, that God is the *original author of mankind*^k. So that it is manifest from reason that God has form'd us.

And this the sacred historian of the creation expressly asserts: *God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; so God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them*^l. And again, *The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul*^m. 'Tis God, who is *the former of all things*ⁿ, that *hath made us, and not we our selves*^o. He both made the matter of which we consist, and moulded it into that form which we bear, and by which our species is distinguished from those of other creatures.

[3.] God is our creator, or the author of our being, in that, as he has fram'd the species of mankind in general; so he is the former of every individual human creature that comes into the world. The multiplication of creatures according to their kind by natural propagation, is a blessing of God pronounc'd

^k Act. 17. 28. *τὸ θεὸς ὁ ἀρχὴ τοῦ κόσμου*
ἐσμεν. Aratus.

^l Gen. 1. 26, 27.

^m Gen. 2. 7.

ⁿ Jer. 10. 16.

^o Psal. 100. 3.

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on them at their creation^p. But this way ordain'd by God for the conservation and increase of each species is very mysterious and wonderful, and is in the scripture term'd creation, and attributed to God as such. The psalmist calls the generation to come, *the people that shall be created*^q; and speaking of the successive dissolution and propagation of animals, he says, *Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth*^r. Here the term creation is used to signify the conservation and multiplication of animals in the ordinary course of nature; and that, as well as the first formation of each species, is ascribed to the Spirit of God^f. And God threatens the Ammonites by the prophet Ezekiel, to judge them *in the place where they were created*; that is, as he explains it in the next words, *in the land of their nativity*^s.

And God is the creator in this respect, in a sense beyond what is ordinarily imagin'd. For it has in vain been attempted by men to explain the formation of plants and animals, by the natural laws of motion: and so many insuperable difficulties meet them, when they would shew how their organs are mechanically form'd in natural generation, that they appear impossible to be solv'd, without attri-

^p Gen. 1.

^q Psal. 102. 18.

^r Psal. 104. 29, 30.

^f Gen. 1. 2.

^s Ezek. 21. 30.

buting

buting to an almighty power the formation of every individual creature, as well as of every species, and that in a way more immediate, at least more mysterious than is commonly supposed.

Nor does the conjecture of the equivocal generation of some plants and insects, tho it has generally prevailed in the world as an undoubted truth, seem well founded; since that supposition has been of late years greatly discredited by many experiments^t, which render it very improbable, that any plant is rais'd without seed by a formative power in the earth, as many have pretended, or any animal spontaneously produc'd without parents. For tho God uses these as instrumental or occasional causes, himself is the efficient cause of all generation; who in this respect, as the apostle says in another, *worketh all in all*^u; and tho he finished the creation in six days, yet may be said to create still, or, as our Saviour speaks, *to work hitherto*^v.

So that it appears to be a work proper to the creator of man, to form him in the womb, and that after a method too mysterious to be trac'd by a human understanding; since the natural laws of motion, at least so far as known by men, are not capable of producing so curious a piece as a human body. And as it is generally supposed that the souls

^t Malpigh. de Gallis. Swam-
merdam de Generat. Insect.
Lewenhoeck. Epistol.

^u 1 Cor. 12. 6.

^v John 5. 17.

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of men are individually form'd, and infus'd into their bodies by the hand of God, since no tolerable account can be otherwise given of their production; so it must be granted, that the form of each individual human body is to be attributed to the same divine power; which operates after so unsearchable a manner, that every man may well say, not only as to the origin of mankind in general, but as to the formation of himself in particular, as Job did, *Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me round about—Thou hast made me as the clay—hast thou not pour'd me out as milk, and crudled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh; and hast fenced me with bones and sinews: thou hast granted me life^w, &c.* And with the psalmist, *Thou hast cover'd me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thy eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashion'd, when as yet there was none of them^x.*

(2.) It hence follows, that God is the upholder and preserver of our being. For this is included in the term *creator*. When God by the prophet addresses himself to the

^w Job 10. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. | ^x Psal. 139. 13, 14, 15, 16.

Israelites, to encourage them to trust in him for their preservation, and to dissipate their fears of danger, he speaks to them under this title ; *Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not*^y, &c. And to this exhortation he adds a promise, to preserve them when surrounded with the greatest difficulties, to be with them in passing *thro' the water*, and *thro' the fire*. And the psalmist makes the relation he stood in to God, as his creature, a plea for his preservation, when he says in his prayer, *O Lord, forsake not the works of thy own hands*^z. The apostle Peter likewise exhorts those that are persecuted, to *commit the keeping of their souls to God, in well doing, as to a faithful creator*^a. So that from hence it is evident, that the relation God bears to us as our creator, includes his providential care for our preservation: that God who is our *maker*, is also *the preserver of men*^b. As it was impossible that we should give being to our selves; so it is beyond our power to continue our selves in being: and as we owe not our existence to any being inferior to God; so neither does the duration of our being depend upon any other than him. It was the will of God that produc'd us, consequently it is the same will that preserves us. Before he actually will'd our production, we could not exist; and if he should cease to

^y Isa. 43. 1.^z Psal. 138. 8.^a 1 Pet. 4. 19.^b Job 7. 20.

will the continuance of our being, it would immediately discontinue, and be annihilated: it is but for him to withdraw his hand, to suspend the influence of his power, and we sink into nothing. So that *we are kept by the power of God* in regard of our natural, as the apostle affirms we are in respect of our spiritual state^c: and since the divine will is equally the cause of our being, and of the duration of it; the term *creator* attributed to God in our text, may be fitly extended to both; our preservation being a continuation of God's creating work: for in this respect, as well as that mention'd before of the formation of successive generations of men, according to the words of Christ, God *works hitherto*^d. And as from him our being is deriv'd; so *in him alone we live, and move, and have our being still*^e; who *upholds all things by the word of his power*^f. And not only we, but all other creatures lean on that almighty hand for their preservation, to which they all equally owe their existence.

(3.) The term *creator* may further include that God is the restorer and reformer of man. 'Tis true, it does not necessarily follow, that, because he has made and preserves us, therefore, after we had undone our selves by sin, and effac'd the image of holiness he impress'd on us in our original frame and constitution, he also must needs actually reform us: but it

^c 1 Pet. i. 5.

^d John 5. 17.

| ^e Act. 17. 28.

| ^f Heb. 1. 3.

does

does thence follow, that none but God can restore a degenerate creature; and that all those, whose corrupt nature is reform'd, derive that blessing from the almighty author of their being. The same divine goodness, wisdom and power, that at the creation of the world said, *let there be light* ^g, which operative word produc'd light immediately, is necessary to illuminate the benighted minds of men, who are by sin become *the children of darkness* ^h; and *to call them out of that darkness into the marvellous light* of divine truth ⁱ. Therefore the apostle Paul assures us, that it is *that God who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that shines in the hearts of such, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* ^k. He who made all things *very good* in their kind at the creation ^l, and who then *made man upright* ^m, he alone is able to rectify the perverseness of his will, and to purify his heart from the pollution it has contracted; to *create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him* ⁿ. Nothing less than our creator's own divine goodness could move him to restore deprav'd sinners; nothing less than his own divine wisdom could contrive the method of their restoration; and nothing less than his own divine power could put it

^g Gen. 1. 3.^h 1 Thess. 5. 5.ⁱ 1 Pet. 2. 9.^k 2 Cor. 4. 6.^l Gen. 1. 31.^m Eccl. 7. 29.ⁿ Psal. 51. 10.

in execution, and accomplish it: he contriv'd the scheme of this glorious work, he appointed and prepared the means, and he renders them effectual to the end design'd.

Who but our creator is able to restore us, and reform us from sin; seeing sin is a privation of sanctity, a nullity oppos'd to the being of holiness? Nay, a state of sin is a state of rebellion against God, a state of enmity and opposition to the author of our being; therefore worse than annihilation it self: because that which is not, as it can do no good, so does no evil; as it is not for God, so is not against him. But a sinful creature commits his sins *against him, even against him*, as the psalmist emphatically repeats it, *and does evil in his sight* °; actually opposes, and dis-serves him, who is the supreme being, and sole author of the whole creation. Therefore tho the word of God brought us out of nullity, and gave us being; nothing less than the *blood* of God^p could avail to redeem us from that abyss of iniquity and misery into which we were sunk by our apostasy from him.

Who but he that *establish'd the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion and understanding* 9, could have form'd the method of our restoration, so as to glorify his *holiness and justice*, as well as his *grace and mercy* by it; so as to make *mercy and truth meet together, and righteous-*

° Psal. 51. 4.

p Act. 20. 28.

9 Jer. 10. 12. & 51. 15.

ness and peace to kiss each other^r, as he hath done by recovering fallen man by the sacrifice of his only begotten son? What depths of wisdom appear in this stupendous *mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh*^t, that sin should be punish'd with the utmost severity, and yet the sinner spar'd by infinite mercy! That our Saviour, who *knew no sin, should be made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*^s! And the same characters of divine wisdom, that appear in the foundation, are seen in the whole superstructure of the church of God, and in every part of this great work of restoration.

Nothing can be more astonishing than that infinite mercy that appears in this mighty work; which can have no other author than that infinite being that hath created us. Who, but *he that made us, would or could have so much mercy on us*^t? And who, but *he that formed us, would shew us so much favour*, as to rescue us from sin, and the curses entail'd on it, by so endearing a ransom, as the precious blood of his own Son?

And as none but our maker is capable of redeeming us; so the frequent use he makes of the term *creator* in his word, to encourage men to obey him, and to trust in him, may well be suppos'd to intimate the design he had form'd to restore sinners to his favour: for had he not revealed himself to be willing,

^r Psal. 85. 10.

^s 1 Tim. 3. 16.

^s 2 Cor. 5. 21.

^t Isa. 27. 11.

as well as able, to be our creator in this sense, by taking us into his hand the second time to reform us, or create us anew; there would be no room for us, since we have all violated the laws of our first creation, to hope to offer any acceptable service to him, or to expect any favour from him: there would be no encouragement to remember him as our creator in the first sense, exclusive of this latter; because our guilt would fill us with terror at every due remembrance of him, who, as he made us for his glory, so is able to punish us, and might justly do it, for the indignities we have offer'd him by our sins. So that whenever God is pleas'd to press or incourage us to our duty in his word, by styling himself our creator, we are to consider that title, as tacitly including his being our redeemer too; that *the God that made us*, is also *the rock of our salvation*^v.

And we find the great work of the Holy Spirit in renewing and regenerating a sinner, is frequently term'd *creation* in holy writ^v; both to signify the greatness of the work, and the resemblance this new creation in several respects bears to the first; and also to denote, that both those mighty works are to be ascrib'd to the same author; and that God may be term'd our creator, not only in that he gave us a being, but also in that he often makes sinners become *new creatures*,

^v Deut. 32. 15.

| ^v 2 Cor. 5. 17. Gal. 6. 15.

by *renewing them in knowledge after his own image*^w; and by *creating them in righteousness and true holiness*^x; who are therefore call'd *his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works*^y, &c.

And it is worth remarking, that this word *creator* in our text, is of the plural number in the original, *thy creators*^z, as if design'd to express the great obligations men are under to each person of the blessed Trinity, for making, redeeming, and sanctifying them; the former of which is eminently ascribed to the Father, the second to the Son, and the last to the Holy Spirit, tho all concur in each of those mighty works; and to signify that all these works may be fitly express'd by this common name of creation.

(4.) As God is our creator, he is the sovereign arbiter, and disposer of our being. He is the supreme judge of the world, inflicting punishments, and dispensing favours, as he pleases. He that has made us, and preserves us, has power to render us happy or miserable: he has the issues of life and death in his hand. He that hath created us, knows all the capacity we have of joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain; and has power to affect us with either of them, as he pleases. He can make his *arrows* of terror *stick fast* in the conscience^a; or fill the soul with unspeakable

^w Col. 3. 10.

^x Eph. 4. 24.

^y Eph. 2. 10.

^z בוראִים So Isa. 54. 5.

בעלִים עֲשִׂים

^a Psal. 38. 2.

joy. He can punish or cheer the mind with his immediate frowns or smiles; or he can convey anguish or joy into the soul, by the occasion of different impressions on the tabernacle of flesh and blood wherein she dwells: he can dispense punishments or pleasures by his own hand immediately, or mediately by any of his creatures. And *when he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation or against a man only^b*. 'Tis the Lord, as Hannah speaks, that *killeth and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he bringeth low and lifteth up^c*. Which this holy prophetess proves by this argument; *For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them*: where his sovereign power over men to dispose of their state as he pleases, is infer'd from his relation to them as their creator. And when the angel in the revelation protests *there should be time no longer*; he *swears by him that created heaven and earth, and sea, and the things therein^d*; to shew that God, as creator of the world, is the sovereign arbiter of it, and that the consummation of time, and of temporal things, belongs to him under that character. So that it is our maker, that both *shews the path of life^e*, and holds in his hand

^b Job 34. 29.^c 1 Sam. 2. 6, 7, 8.^d Rev. 10. 6.^e Psal. 16. 11.

the keys of hell and death^f. And as he made all things; so he does whatsoever he pleases in heaven, and in earth, in the sea, and all deep places^g. And, who can deliver out of his hand^h? seeing he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thouⁱ?

Thus have we endeavoured to shew what is comprehended in God's title of *creator*; on which we have taken the greater liberty to expatiate, because hereby a solid foundation is laid for some of those reasons, on which we are hereafter to insist to inforce the duty in our text; in the division of which we have observ'd, that in the terms of the duty, *Remember thy creator*, the reasons of that duty are in part insinuated.

Having given some account of the object of this duty, *viz.* God, under the title of our creator; we shall now,

Secondly, briefly explain the act it self of remembring him, and shew what that imports.

The memory is that faculty of the soul whereby she is capable of recalling the ideas of things, which have before been present to her.

But here, *to remember* not only signifies the exercising of the understanding on our creator, by reflecting on what our senses, reason,

^f Rev. 1. 18.

^g Psal. 135. 6.

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^h Job 10. 7.

ⁱ Dan. 4. 35.

D

and

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and divine revelation may have suggested to our minds, concerning God under that character: it does not here barely import, *to meditate* on him^k, and *bear him in mind*^l, but, because the understanding directs the will and affections, and men move and act very much according to their conceptions of things, their desires following the conduct of their thoughts; this term is applied both to the one, and to the other. Sometimes it signifies to esteem and respect, as Psal. 20. 3. *The Lord—remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice.* Sometimes to trust, as Psal. 20. 7. *Some trust in horses, and some in Chariots; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.* Sometimes to worship and praise, as 1 Chron. 16. 12 where, after David had exhorted to sing to God, to glory in him, and seek him, because of his mighty works, he adds to the same purpose, *Remember the marvellous works that he hath done, &c. q. d.* Adore and praise him for them.

And this may be farther illustrated by the use of the opposite term of *forgetting*, which sometimes signifies to disesteem and slight, as Jer. 2. 32. *Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.* Sometimes to distrust, as Psal. 78. 7. *That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God: and sometimes to neglect to praise*

^k Psal. 63. 6.

^l Luke 17. 32.

and worship God, as Psal. 106. 12, 13. *They sang his praise: they soon forgot his works, they waited not for his counsel.* Or to forsake the service of God, as Deut. 6. 12. *Beware lest thou forget the Lord,* that is, by going after other Gods, as it is explain'd in ver. 14.

So that, to remember God does not only import, to think or meditate often on him, but to think worthily and becomingly of him; and to pay him a respect in some measure suitable to the idea we have of him. To remember his glorious perfections so, as to esteem and respect him; deliberately, to call to mind the number and quality of his favours, and to recollect, how fit an object of trust, and praise, and of all worship, he is; so as to engage our souls to confide in him, to offer him the sacrifice of praise, and all the adoration and service that we are capable of rendering. In a word, to remember our creator is to remember his omniscience, power and justice, so as to reverence and fear him; to remember his goodness, mercy and veracity, so as to love and praise him; and to remember his holiness and purity, so as to imitate and obey him: 'tis so attentively and seriously to meditate on his nature and on his works, that *while we are musing the fire may burn*^m, as the psalmist speaks, that our thoughts may kindle a holy flame of love in our hearts towards him, which will break out in becoming acts of service, and obedi-

^m Psal. 39. 3.

ence to his glory. 'Tis to serve him both with our understanding, will and affections, to devote our selves entirely to him.

And as our whole man is to be dedicated to the service of our creator ; so he also deserves the whole of our time : and we ought to begin as early as possible to remember him : for this our text shews,

II. In prescribing the special time for engaging in this duty ; which now falls under our consideration.

1. 'Tis prescrib'd in exprefs terms, *in the days of thy youth.*

2. By an opposite circumlocution, containing a description of old age, *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them,* that is, before the approach of old age.

As is evident, both in that these *evil days*, &c. are opposed to the *days of youth* ; and in that many elegant characters are used to decipher the infirmities and miseries of old age, in the sequel of this chapter, immediately after the text.

And in this description of old age, we have,

(1.) The time it self expreffed by days and years.

(2.) The character of that time of life, those *days are evil*, and those years such as, we shall confess that, *we have no pleasure in them.*

(1.) For

(1.) For the time it self, it may be call'd *days and years.*

[1.] Either emphatically to signify one and the same thing; it being an usual elegancy in the Hebrew dialect, to express the same thing in various synonymous terms in two sentences, one of which immediately succeeds the other, which serve partly for illustration, and partly to inculcate truth in the mind: of which we have instances in almost every verse of the 51st psalm, as well as in many other places of scripture, as it is easy to observe. Or else,

[2.] By *days* to signify the brevity and great uncertainty of the continuance of that time; which is soon swallowed up by death, as the fleeting days of youth are soon lost in old age; and by *years* the tedious passing of this short time, by reason of the many afflictions and infirmities a man then labours under: tho the time is very short in it self, it is made very long by misery and pain, which seem greatly to extend it. For as the soul, when fill'd with pleasure and joy, during her easy posture, forgets the time, as it were, and suffers it to slide from her with little notice; which makes it appear extremely short: so when she is fill'd with sentiments of pain and sorrow, her uneasy situation, and impatient desire of change, do so constantly apply her thoughts to the consideration of that time, which is the continuance of her misery, that it seems very long and irksome to her:

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so that the duration of her sorrow seems always to increase in proportion to the degree of it; and a man imagines himself to have been much longer under an acute than under a slight pain, when in reality the time of their continuance is equal. Thus every moment of time becomes an heavy burden to one in misery, who, as Moses says the Israelites should do, when under punishment for their sins, cries out, *in the morning, would to God it were evening! and in the evening, would to God it were morning*ⁿ!—And it is well known that this is the language of old age. And therefore,

(2.) 'Tis express'd by the character of *evil days*, and years wherein *no pleasure* is to be had; which may be thus explain'd.

[1.] By *evil days* may be understood the decays and diseases of old age^o: and by *the years wherein there is no pleasure*, may be signified the unhappiness and misery that those distempers and infirmities give the mind, these being a great occasion of her sorrow, which is then especially aggravated, when the guilt of the soul conspires with the distempers of the body, to make the man completely miserable; so that he shall say, that is, he shall confess or complain, that *he has no pleasure in those evil days*, that he has no sanctuary of ease to fly to, no reflection to make that can allay the trouble of his

ⁿ Deut. 28. 67.

^o *Ætas mala.* Plaut.

mind,

mind, no medicine to use that can remove the distempers of his body. For this is often the condition of those, who *forgetting the Lord their maker*^P in their youth, grow old in the service of sin. Or,

[2.] By *evil days*, which is a positive character, the time of old age may be represented, as attended with many positive afflictions and pains; and by the privation of pleasure at that time, which is a negative character, may be signified the incapacity of relishing the joys and pleasures of this life, that accompanies those unpleasant years, wherein the organs of sense are very much enfeebled, especially when old age has been hasten'd by the intemperance of youth.

And now since it appears that God as our creator, in the comprehensive sense wherein we have explain'd that title, requires us to remember him, so as to devote our selves to his fear and service, and that in the time of our youth, before old age, with its many afflictions and sorrows, overtakes us; if one makes but a transient reflection on these things, 'tis easy to observe that the wise man in this exhortation intimates,

III. The reasons of the duty enjoin'd :

I. In representing God, the object of it, to us, under the august character of our creator; which evidently entitles him to the service of our youth. And,

^P Isa. 51. 13.

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2. In setting old age before us, as a scene of misery and horror; as a time made up of *few and evil days*^a. And in opposing them to the better days of youth; thereby to insinuate, that as old age brings with it many great disadvantages and impediments to obstruct our conversion to God; so youth is attended with many favourable circumstances, that render it the best and fittest season to initiate one's self in the ways of righteousness.

The strength of these reasons I shall consider at large hereafter: and shall content myself at present with making some few brief remarks,

(1.) On the terms used to prescribe the special time of the duty enjoin'd in the text.

(2.) On the terms, whereby both the object and act of this duty are express'd: to shew how fitly they are adapted to the state and circumstances of those that are young, who are the persons to whom this exhortation is address'd;

With which I shall conclude this discourse.

(1.) From the terms used to shew the time of remembering our creator, it may be observ'd;

[1.] That this double timing of the duty, first by expressly prescribing it in youth, and then before old age, with its miseries, comes on, gives the words a certain force and energy, proper to inculcate so important

^a Gen. 47. 9.

an admonition: this is to give *precept upon precept, and line upon line*^r, as the prophet Isaiah speaks; which he commends as the proper course to instruct the young, or, to use his own words, to *teach them knowledge, and to make them understand doctrine, who are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts*^r; to gain the attention of giddy and unthinking youth, many of whom, tho God condescends to *speak once, yea twice*^s, as he does here, are yet so dull of hearing, as not to perceive the reasonableness of their duty, or at least not sufficiently to consider it, and the danger to which the neglect of it exposes them. And,

[2.] We may further observe, that this obligation of remembering our creator, extends it self equally with the capacity we have of considering God, as our maker; and increases in proportion to the knowledge we may obtain of him. So that none are intirely exempt from it, who are capable of exercising their thoughts on God: and therefore those may not pretend to be dispens'd with, who have not arriv'd to the full maturity of youth, if they are in any degree capable of knowing their creator. As far as they are able to take notice of his nature, and of his will, so far are they oblig'd to worship and obey him.

^r Isa. 28. ver. 10, 13:

^r Ver. 9.

| ^s Job 33. 14.

And

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And this is farther cleared by the opposition the wise man seems to make, betwixt the duty in our text, and the *vanity of childhood and youth*, mentioned just before : so that if we take *vanity* here in a moral sense, the exhortation extends it self to persons that fall under either of those denominations, that are either in the state of childhood or youth. And if by *vanity*, natural frailty and mortality be intended, the words are not less extensive : for then the frailty of childhood and youth, is used as a consideration to prepare the way for this admonition ; and children as well as young men, are therefore excited to give themselves to the service of their creator, because neither are exempt from the danger of sickness and of death.

And this may be farther collected from the charge given to youth in the text, to remember their creator, not only before the evil days of old age are come ; but before those years draw nigh, while old age is yet at a distance : which shews that none who are capable of reflecting on their relation to God as creator, may excuse themselves as too young to be concern'd in his service. For as his being our creator, is the foundation of this duty of remembering him : so it is evident that our obligation to it is to be measured by the capacity we have of knowing him as such. Therefore he may well require that the tender buds of childhood, as well as the maturer blossoms of youth, be consecrated
to

to him; who sometimes *perfects his praise out of the mouths of* such, who in comparison of those of riper years, are but *babes and sucklings*^t; and therefore by the psalmist, calls upon *young men and maidens, and children*, as well as *old men*^u, to praise and worship him.

(2.) That the terms of *remembering their creator* are wisely adapted to the state of youth, to engage them early in the service of God, will appear by the following remarks on each of those terms.

(1.) God under the title of *creator*, is fitly recommended to the young, as the object of their worship and obedience.

1.) Because it is a term that easily excites in the mind a strong and clear idea of God's infinite power, wisdom and goodness. And the wise man having to do with youth, whose unexperience for want of years, and whose inattention for want of a habit of steady thinking, renders them less capable of arriving at the knowledge of *the deep things of God*^v, than those who to the advantage of a long observation of things have added that of addicting themselves to frequent thoughtfulness and meditation; he makes use of that title of God, which might most familiarly suggest a proper notion of him to their minds. He exposes to them the alphabet of the creation, out of which even chil-

^t Psal. 8. 2. Mat. 21. 16.

^u Psal. 148. 12, 13.

| ^v 1 Cor. 2. 10.

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dren may easily learn to spell the being of a Deity. The ignorant and the young, even *those that run*, as the prophet speaks^w, the heedless and unattentive, may read the characters of the divine attributes, which are plainly engraven on the pillars even of this material world: and, as the apostle observes, may *clearly discern the eternal power and Godhead* of the creator^x, who is invisible, by the curious fabric of this visible creation; so as to render them altogether inexcusable, if they neglect to glorify God according to those sensible notices of him, which they may so easily and constantly receive.

For as the sight of a magnificent palace, induces us to consider the skill and ability of the architect that built it: so when we take a serious prospect of the structure and frame of the world, or of any part of it, it familiarly raises our thoughts to its great author and cause: for as *every house is built by some man*^y; so it is natural to conclude, with the apostle, that *he that built all things is God*. And therefore,

2.) This of *creator* is a title which God is usually pleas'd to assume in scripture, to distinguish himself, as the *true and living God*, from the idols of the heathen; and to convince their ignorant votaries, that he is the only proper object of religious worship. *The Lord is the true God*, saith the prophet

^w Hab. 2. 2.

^x Rom. 1. 20, 21.

^y Heb. 3. 4.

Jeremiah;

Jeremiah; *he is the living God, and an everlasting King*^z.—*The Gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens*^a. Then speaking again of the true God, he says, *He hath made the earth by his power; he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion*^b. And then, having spoken of the vanity of idols, he adds; *The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things*^c. And the prophet Isaiah introduces the God of Israel, proving himself to be the true God, under the same character: *I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded*^d. And, a little after, the prophet insults over the makers of idols^e; and then adds, *Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens, God himself, that formed the earth and made it, he hath established it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord, and there is none else*^f.

All which serves to shew how properly this title of *creator* is used in our text, to direct the minds of youth to the true object of love and adoration; who are ready to make as many Gods, as there are pleasing ob-

^z Jer. 10. 10.

^a Ver. 11.

^b Ver. 12.

^c Ver. 14, 15, 16.

^d Isa. 45. 12.

^e Ver. 16, 17.

^f Ver. 18.

jects in the world; and to sacrifice themselves, and all they have to those enchanting idols, that strike their senses with any agreeable impressi^on. And,

3.) This is a relative title, denoting the natural relation God bears to the world; for the terms *creator* and *creature* mutually suppose one another: and not only his relation to the world in general; but to mankind, nay to every individual human creature in particular, in the word *thy creator*, is propos'd as the ground of that service every one that comes into the world is oblig'd to pay to the almighty, whose title of *creator* includes our entire dependance on him. So that the wise man prudently makes choice of a term, expressing every man's relation to God as his creature; because it is the first and most evident principle, on which to found our duty of obedience to him, and most apt to affect the soul. For, as when I think on God as creator of the world in general, it raises in my mind a great idea of his majesty and sovereignty: so when I consider him as *my creator*, that relative character gives an endearing force to the reasonable obligation I find myself under to serve and worship him; because I then look upon him not only as *the living God*, but also as *the god of my life* ^z.

We may also observe,

[2.] The propriety of the term *remember*, to express the respect and service those that are young owe to their maker.

^z Psal. 42. 8.

1.) *To remember*, &c. signifying the exercise of the thoughts on God, is fitly urg'd on the young ; because as the most early impressions are the most deep and lasting, so a habit of holy meditation is soonest acquir'd in youth, when the mind is most at leisure, and not embarrass'd with that multitude of thoughts and projects about the affairs of the world, with which riper years are usually incumber'd. What fitter term could be chosen, by which to urge the duty of young persons to their maker, than that of remembering him ? seeing the memory is a faculty in which young people commonly excel, and often glory ; a faculty that grows ripe betimes, and easily retains that tincture, with which it is early and thorowly imbued. 'Tis as if Solomon had said ; you that are young, ought to season your memories with the best impressions betimes, when they are most capable both of receiving and retaining them ; and to fill your minds with the thoughts of God, and of the service you owe him, before they are crouded with the concerns and business of a perplexing world.

2.) A caution seems to be wisely insinuated in this term against forgetting the worship and service of God, of which heedless youth, too much devoted to sensual pleasure, is often guilty ; for tho the young have the most capacious memories, yet they are very prone to forget their duty to their maker. And how aptly soever they remember other things,

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things, they often live as if *God were not in any of their thoughts*^h: for they commonly divert and dissipate their minds so much with the amusing pleasures of this present world, that they don't allow themselves time enough, either to look backward, to remember that God who created them, and to whom they owe their preservation; nor forward, to consider that it is only in his power to renew and reform them from their vices and errors; and that he will one day judge them; who as he is their creator, has the sovereign disposal of their being, and has power either to save, or to destroy: in whose favour is life, and whose displeasure is more terrible than death.

^h Psal. 10. 4.



The



The reasonableness and advantages of an early conversion to God demonstrated.

S E R M O N II.

ECCLES. xii. i.

Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.



HAVING before explain'd the exhortation in the text, which the wise man addressees to those that are young, viz. *To remember their creator in the days of their youth*; or to devote themselves early to the worship and service of God:

We are now to consider the reasons whereby this duty is enforc'd, which are plainly enough insinuated in the text, as we have before observ'd in the division of it.

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First,

First, in the terms of the duty, where our relation to God, as our creator, implies the obligations we have to adore and serve him.

Secondly, in the words used to signify the proper time of engaging in this duty, *viz. In the days of youth, before the evil days of old age come, &c.* Where the fitness of the time of youth to enter one's self into the service of God, and the disadvantage of deferring it to old age, are intimated.

First then, we shall take a view of the reasons that oblige us to devote our selves to the service of God in youth, which arise from the relation that is between him and us, as he is our creator, and we are his creatures: and this in that large and comprehensive sense we have given of the term *creator*, by which we have laid the ground-work of our present reasoning.

I. As God is our creator and preserver, we derive from him our being, and the whole duration of it; that is, the whole of our time: therefore,

(1.) He has an equitable claim to us as long as we have a being, and to our youth by consequence: 'tis but just that what we receive from his hand, should be again offer'd to him; that since we live by his good will, we should live to his glory. Can we assign any portion of our time, which we do not equally derive from our creator with the rest of it? Why then should any of those moments that are allotted us by his mere favour,
be

be injuriously withdrawn from his service, and abus'd to his dishonour?

The great God, whose chief end in all he does is his own glory, because that is the best and most excellent end of all, made us, and continues our being for his own pleasure and glory. Therefore to alienate any part of our time from him, is to oppose his designs, and, as much as in us lies, to endeavour to frustrate his end, and sacrilegiously to rob him of his honour.

Nor do we only with-hold divine honour from him to whom it is due, when we neglect to employ any part of our time in the service of our creator: for man being a creature that can never be altogether idle and unactive, that part of our lives, or portion of our time which we divert from the proper end for which it is allow'd us, is not only stolen from God, but devoted to the service of sin. 'Tis to snatch away a sacrifice from the altar of the true God, and immediately to offer it to the worst of idols. How provoking must this needs be to that God, who is so jealous of his glory, that he *will not give it to any other*ⁱ! much less will he suffer it, with impunity, to be given to sin, which is infinitely opposite to his holy nature, and which he therefore hates with a perfect hatred.

No wonder then that he requires the whole succession of our time to be devoted

ⁱ Isa. 42. 8. chap. 48. 11.

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to himself, and that *whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do it to his glory*^k; making that the chief end of all our actions, which is the end of our being, and of its continuance. And this seem'd so highly reasonable to the psalmist, that after a long meditation on the works of the great creator, it influences him to a firm resolution to honour and worship the author of his being thro'out the whole course of his time: *I will sing unto the Lord, says he, as long as I live; I will sing praise unto my God, while I have my being*^l.

Now if the whole of our time be the property of our creator, not given us to squander away as we please, but lent us to improve to his honour; then he may justly claim our youth to be dedicated to his service: if he is the proprietor of the whole of our time, as we have prov'd he is, in that he is our creator, he has a right to each part of it: if we with-hold from him the service of our youth, we detain a part of our time from him, who has a natural right to the whole of it. And that part of time, when once elaps'd, being irrevocable, there remains but a part of the whole to offer; and we can then only render to the great author of our being, a defective and mutilous sacrifice. And,

(2.) As our youth belongs to our maker, as a part of that time, of which the sum

^k 1 Cor. 10. 31.

^l 1 Psal. 104. 33. Psal. 146. 2.

total is his due, so it is his propriety as it is the first-fruits of that time, the succession of which we enjoy by his mere favour and bounty. To be serv'd first, is considered as a token of honour and respect amongst men ; how reasonably then does the infinite dignity of our creator, join'd to the obligations we owe him, as such, claim at our hands an humble and solemn dedication of that part of our time especially to himself, which he first bestows, and in which he first renders us capable of offering him service? The sacred historian of the creation, representing the sanctification of the sabbath, as immediately succeeding the creation of man, the last of God's works on the last of his working-days, seems to signify the obligation we are all under to consecrate our youth, the first-fruits of our time, to the service of the author of our being : and that as the first day our first parents liv'd after their creation, was especially sacred to God, as an oblation of the first-fruits of their time ; so we their posterity, ought to devote our youth to our maker, and to serve him, as soon as we are capable of knowing him. Righteous *Abel* pay'd an acceptable homage to his creator, by presenting him a sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock ^m. And as the first-fruits of the holy-land were yearly consecrated to God as the great creator and sovereign proprietor of it ⁿ ; so his right over his creatures was also

^m Gen. 4. 4.| ⁿ Exod. 22. 29. ch. 23. 19.

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antiently acknowledg'd, by the dedication of the first-born both of men and cattle to his service°. All which certainly is written for our instruction, and may fairly enough be apply'd to our present purpose: for if God has a special right to the first of all we have, as these antient institutions seem to signify, then he may reasonably challenge the first of our time, as having a peculiar title to that part, by the dedication of which we acknowledge we are indebted to him for the whole; and the refusal of which is an implicit assertion of our independency on him, as if we owed only to ourselves our own being, and our time, which is the duration of it.

So that they think very preposterously, who count the time of youth the most unreasonable of all for the service of God; when 'tis evident, that if it were allowable to subtract any part of our time from him, as it is not, yet, of all the parts of it, it would be the most indecent and disrespectful to withhold from him this of youth, taken in a large sense, not only to contain childhood, but all the flower of our time; because he not only claims a right to it, as 'tis a part of our time, the whole of which is deriv'd from him, but as it is that peculiar part of it, which ought to be dedicated to him as an homage, whereby we acknowledge the obligation he has laid us under for the whole he is pleas'd to allow us. Nor has our creator a more rea-

° Exod. 13. 2, 12.

sonable claim to our youth, as his peculiar, because 'tis the first part, than he has,

(3.) Because 'tis also the best part of our time, wherein the faculties of the soul have ordinarily no less gracefulness and vigour, than the members of the body have beauty and strength; wherein we are most capable of engaging in any great undertaking, and possess suitable advantages for the accomplishment of it, as we shall have occasion hereafter to shew more at large. 'Tis then but just, that he that made us what we are, should have the best of what we have. If he has a right to all our time in general, because we receive it all from his hand, he has a peculiar right to the best of our time, as that which his own infinite excellency, and his great goodness to us, direct us to consecrate to him, as most proper for an offering. Why has our maker ordinarily adorn'd youth with so many delectable flowers, with so much strength and agility of body, and comeliness of form, such a capacity of memory, and quickness of fancy, such a readiness of perception, and vivacity of spirit? Why has he crown'd it with so many advantageous qualities, but to indicate by these preparations, that he has design'd it for a special sacrifice? The word used in our text and elsewhere for youth^p, properly signifies the choice of our time, our select or chosen time, and does import not only that

^p בחר אֵל בַּהֲרוֹתֶיךָ *elegit, vel selegit.*

our creator chuses that part of our time for himself, but that it has several advantages that render it the most eligible; that 'tis in itself the most fit to be chosen, and set apart for his service.

'Tis therefore to offer a great indignity to our creator, to refuse him the prime of our time, on pretence that we'll offer him our decrepid age, the worst of our days, and the very dregs of 'em; as if he were unworthy of the best part of what he has given us; as if we could offer any thing beyond his deserts, who has given us our all; nay, as if the devil, the world, and our own corrupt inclinations, were more worthy objects of worship, than the ever blessed God who has made us: as if he were to be postpon'd to the vilest and most detestable of all idols; as if both the first and best of what we have ought to be devoted to these; and as if the lame and blind and maim'd were the only sacrifices becoming his altar.

The priests under the law were consecrated in their youth^a, and continued in the service of the sanctuary only to that age wherein 'tis ordinary for natural strength visibly to abate; to signify that that part of our time, wherein we are most capable of serving our maker, ought especially to be devoted to him as the most acceptable portion of our days. And is it not fit that he that has made us for himself, should have

^a Numb. 8. 24, 25.

the best of our service? that the strength of our bodies should be dedicated to him that moulded and compos'd them? and that the powers of our souls should, in their most flourishing and vigorous state, be offer'd to the great author of all our faculties? Ought not the most attentive regards of our understandings to be employ'd in contemplating him that has made us rational, and the most sprightly and eager fallies of our wills to be directed towards him who has made us desiring creatures? Certainly as God is our maker, he deserves as well as requires that we most seriously contemplate, and most intensely love him, on the account both of his own infinite perfections, and of the emanations of his goodness toward us his creatures; and consequently that we improve the best of our time in those holy exercises of meditating on him, and aspiring after him.

2. As the notion of *creator* includes, that upon the supposition of man's fall by sin, God alone is able to perform this mighty work of reforming or new-creating him; and as the manner of the use of this term in the holy scripture intimates also his willingness so to do, as we have shewn at large before: this farther shews the reason we have to devote our youth to his service. And this consideration renews and redoubles the force of the former reasons: for *what is man, fallen man, that God should be mindful of him?*

him? and the son of man that he should visit him? What great grace has the great God manifested to us, that when we had forfeited all the blessings to be expected of him as our creator, in rebelliously casting off that natural obligation we were under to obey him, he should neither make us cease to be his creatures, and intirely dissolve that relation, by forsaking the work of his hands, or annihilating us; nor vindicate his injur'd authority, by upholding our being only to render us miserable, and by treating us as his enemies rather than as the objects of his favour; but on the contrary that he should still shew respect to us as the works of his hands, by preserving *our* being, by exercising patience and long-suffering toward us, by encompassing us with many temporal favours, and by opening and *consecrating a new and living way*^t, whereby we might return to him, by proposing to us terms of peace and reconciliation *by the blood of the cross*^s; and by offering to *renew us in the spirit of our minds*^t: in a word, to make us *new creatures after his own image*^v; that so we might be not only again intitled to those former lost blessings, that were naturally suited to obedient creatures of that order and rank of being wherein God had plac'd us at the beginning; but might have our happiness

^r Psal. 8. 4.^f Heb. 10. 20.^s Col. 1. 20.^t Eph. 4. 23.^v Col. 3. 10.

highly improv'd, as well as effectually secur'd by that new and nearer relation to God thro' Jesus Christ, which interests them that believe in his name in those unconceivable joys which he has merited: upon which account our creator treats those that are thus reconcil'd to him, not only as his creatures but as his children; and since his only begotten Son, *whom he hath appointed heir of all things*^u, is not *asham'd to call them brethren*^w, he refuses not to treat 'em as *joint-heirs with him*^x, nor disdains to be call'd their father.

So that the consideration of God, as the author of this new and spiritual creation, lays on us the strongest obligation imaginable to serve and obey him, in that it contains both the highest reason and the strongest motive of that obedience: for as it is very reasonable that we should obey him that has wisdom and power enough to change and reform, and render happy such sinful, deprav'd and miserable creatures as we are, so 'tis the greatest good that can be done us, and therefore is to be earnestly sought at the hands of the infinitely gracious God: and seeing he is so liberal as to offer *to give his holy spirit*^y, the principle of all grace and spiritual life, *to them that sincerely ask and diligently seek it of him*; here is the greatest motive and encouragement to engage us in his service, since, I say, he is not be-

^u Heb. 1. 2.^w Heb. 2. 11, 12, 13.^x Rom. 8. 15, 16, 17.^y Luke 11. 13.

come inexorable by our sins, but still *waits to be gracious* to us ^z, offering to *write his law in our hearts* ^a, and to *put his fear into our inward parts* ^b, by the power of his spirit, and also assuring us, that *in keeping his commandments there is great reward* ^c.

If therefore the first and best part of our time is God's peculiar claim as he has made us, much more ought we to offer the first-fruits of our time to the service of him who is become reconcilable to us in Christ Jesus, and is both able and willing to add to the obligation of the first, that of a second and more glorious creation. Surely we owe not only the first and best, but the whole of our time now upon a new account to our creator, since he has made such provision for our reformation, and so for our happiness, not only thro' the course of our time here, but thro' an entire eternity hereafter. Which leads me to the last thing I have to urge from the import of the term *creator*, viz.

3. As this title implies that God is the sovereign arbiter and disposer of our being, because this is a necessary consequence of that relation of creator; it carries with it a forcible argument to engage those that are young in the service of God. *Our times are in his hand* ^d, who can prolong or contract them as he pleases; and we must be account-

^z Isa. 30. 18.

^a Jer. 31. 33.

^b Heb. 8. 10.

^c Psal. 19. 11.

^d Psal. 31. 15.

able to him for the days he has lent us, and receive a sentence according to our improvement or abuse of them. How reasonable is it, and how much for our interest to offer that part of our time to our creator, to which he lays his peculiar claim ; nay, to consecrate the whole of it to his service ; seeing as he is the author of our being, he has a right to the sovereign disposal of it ; and if we with-hold any part of our time from him, he can fill up the remainder of our days with pain and sorrow, or cut us off in his displeasure in the midst of our days, and force us into an eternity of anguish and misery ? How *terrible a thing* is it thus *to fall into the hands of the living God*^e ; who, as he has made us, knows how to punish our disobedience with all the kinds and degrees of torment of which he has made, or can make our nature capable ! And how highly does it concern us to dedicate the blossoms and early fruits of our youth to his service, who is able to reward our early obedience with a long and happy life here, if he pleases, and to fill up a whole eternity in communicating various pleasures to the soul in another and better world ; who gives all the kinds and degrees of joy and solace of which we either are or can be capable, and how to give us the most ravishing delights, and to excite in our souls the most lively sentiments of that joy which is *unspeakable and full of glory*^f !

^e Heb. 10. 31.^f 1 Pet. 1. 8.

How

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How much does it concern us to offer to the author of our being, the sacrifice of the prime portion of our age, seeing he is able either eternally to sustain our bodies and souls, by his almighty hand, from sinking into nullity, amidst the everlasting torments of hell, that so our woe and misery, ten thousand times worse than annihilation, may become eternal too ! Or can uphold our being by his everlasting arms, so as to give us the strength and beauty of an eternal youth both in soul and body, and to entertain us with the uninterrupted views of his divine countenance, and with the constant emanations of his infinite love ! Who can entertain the soul with continual impressions of the highest joy, without the dissolution or enfeebling of her being, or any faculty that belongs to it ! for he that has created us is the sovereign disposer of what he has made ; and to him 'tis possible to make men even to *see his face and live* *.

Nor is this duty of dedicating our youth to the service of our creator, as that character involves his power to dispose of us as to happiness or misery, as he pleases, barely to be argued from that awful and stupendous power and authority ; but also from the manifest discovery our creator has made in this case, as well of his will and pleasure, as of his right and power. For he has declar'd, that *the wicked shall not live out half their*

* Exod. 33. 20. 1 Cor. 13. 12. 1 John 3. 2.

days,

days^h, and that they shall die before their timeⁱ; that it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, because he feareth not before God^k. And he has added a promise to the fifth precept of his law, which is the first command with promise^l, of a long and happy life to those that shew an early piety by their obedience and respect to their natural parents, the instruments of their production, as an instance of their respect to their heavenly father, the original author of their being: As the apostle well expresses it, *Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth*^m. And tho God in the wise and mysterious way of his providence, makes some exceptions from these general rules of extending or contracting the time of men in this world, sometimes suffering an *accursed sinner to live an hundred years*ⁿ, and an early convert to die betimes: yet if the vices committed in youth be impenitently persisted in, that an eternal state of misery will be the dreadful consequence of it; as on the other hand, that our creator not only can, but certainly will reward the early consecration of our time to him, with an eternal state of

^h Psal. 55. 23.

ⁱ Eccl. 7. 17.

^k Eccl. 8. 13.

^l Exod. 20. 12.

^m Eph. 6. 1, 2, 3.

ⁿ Isa. 65. 20.

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bliss, cannot be doubted by such as read and give credit to the scriptures of truth. For as a multitude of threatnings contain'd therein give assurance of the former, so the latter is no less confirmed by variety of great and precious promises; which, if they ascertain glory to all the saints in general, must not only comprehend those that were sanctified betimes, but may reasonably raise their hopes to expect a distinguishing reward.

And because the title of creator comprehends that of a judge, 'tis probable that Solomon, after a caution to youth against sin, because of the certainty of the future judgment of God °, brings in the words of our text by way of argument upon it, *therefore remember thy creator, &c.* as we have before shewn it might have been translated, *i. e.* because he that has made thee, has a right to dispose of thy being, and will judge thee.

So that how well soever it fares with the wicked in this world, we may conclude with the wise man, *tho a sinner do evil an hundred times, q. d. how often soever he repeats his sins, and his days be prolonged; yet, says he, surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him^p; and that implies a woe unto the harden'd sinner, and that, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him^q.*

° Eccl. 11. 9.

^p Eccl. 8. 12.

| ^q Isa. 3. 11.

From the reasons included in the term *creator*, wherein our relation to God, as his creatures, implies we are under great obligations to remember, to love, and serve him early, we pass,

Secondly, to the arguments insinuated in those words, which express the proper time of engaging in this duty, *viz. in the days of youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when we shall say, we have no pleasure in them*; wherein the advantages that attend the time of youth, and the contrary evils and impediments that accompany old age, which render the former the far more eligible time in which to begin to devote one's self to the service of God, are suggested. Which advantages on the one hand, and disadvantages on the other, we are now to consider.

I. Then it behoves us to dedicate ourselves betimes to the service of our creator, because the work of conversion is much more easily perform'd in youth than in old age. And seeing there is a necessity of our turning to God once in our lives, or else we become irrecoverably miserable; prudence directs to the choice of the best time for so weighty a purpose. The wise man tells us, *God has made every thing beautiful in its season*^r, and that *there is a fit time for every purpose under the heaven*^f; and if all wise men are careful to chuse a convenient season for the common

^r Eccl. 3. 11.

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^f Eccl. 3. 1—10.

F

affairs

affairs of the world, that relate only to their temporal interest, how prodigious a piece of folly must it be for a man to suffer the fittest season to escape him for the performance of that work, which is the most difficult of all others to be well done, and upon the due accomplishment of which, both his present and future happiness depends ! For,

(1.) Youth is the best time for our conversion ; because the soul is not then so much vitiated by evil habits, as when she has run thro' the several stages of life in a continued course of wickedness. Tho sin is deeply enough rooted in our nature, which is all defil'd with the original stain ; yet we very much fortify our corrupt inclinations by producing them into act ; and by multiplying those sinful acts, till they become familiar and customary to us, and till we *drink down iniquity like water* ^s : so that the difficulty of turning from sin encreases together with the time of our continuance in the practice of it. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil*, says the prophet ^t. Is it to be thought that conversion to God is so slight and easy a matter, that any time may serve for its accomplishment ? Are not the difficulties that a long habit of sinning will lay in the way of that great and important work to be fear'd ? is it not much more easy to bend a young twig than an

^s Job 15. 16.

^t Jer. 13. 23.

aged oak, and to prevent evil habits than to rectify 'em? A little observation of the world may suffice to inform us, that long custom or habit is so bewitching a thing, that scarce any thing can be imagin'd more ridiculous, absurd, and inconvenient, than divers modes and actions, which yet the long usage of some persons, nay of some whole nations, has authoriz'd.

And if men are so tenacious of any silly and troublesom thing to which they have been much addicted, and sacrifice their reason, their honour, and their ease to the tyranny of custom; how much more prevalent must a long habit and course of sin be, which, besides its deep rooting in our nature, and besides the ordinary force of mere habit, has both its flattering promises and pleasures to tempt us to its embraces, and its threats and terrors too, in suggesting all the mortifying circumstances of a virtuous course of life, to raise in our minds the most frightful idea of piety and religion? So that, if custom and habit in general be proverbially styl'd a second nature^v, the habit of sin may of all others most fitly be so term'd: and the force of its dominion over our souls, and the difficulty of its extirpation out of them, must needs have an increase proportionate to the time of its duration in them. Can any thing then be more evident, than that, in the days of our youth, when sin has not yet so deeply

* Ἐγγενίζον ἐστὶ φύσεως καὶ παλαιότερόν ἐστι.

rooted itself in our hearts by evil habits, as in old age after a long course of vice, in a multitude of repeated acts, our conversion must needs have the most easy and kindly accomplishment?

(2.) This farther appears, in that the minds of the young are ordinarily the most capable of instruction. It was a saying of a philosopher, that *to cure a dead man, and teach an old man, are things equally difficult* ^v: for, tho in some respects youth is sufficiently addicted to pride, yet there is a kind of natural modesty and becoming humility often discernible in the young, arising from a consciousness of their ignorance, and unexperience of things, which disposes them to a more docile frame of mind, than is usually to be found in elder persons, whose maturity of age often makes 'em unwilling to be inform'd, especially in matters of religion, either because they imagine they already know what others may pretend to teach 'em, or because they are unwilling to undergo the shame of being accounted so long ignorant of religion, and their concern therein, with which every one ought to be early acquainted. And upon this account, 'tis likely, our Saviour tells his disciples, that *except they should humble themselves and become as little children, they should not enter into the king-*

^v Νενεχρ' ἰατρύειαν, καὶ γέροντα καθεύδειν, ταυτὸν ἐστίν. Diog. Laert. Lib. 6.

dom of heaven^x; i. e. unless they should imitate children in modesty and lowliness of mind, that the sense of their ignorance might make 'em teachable.

Besides, the minds of youth are generally a much fitter soil for truth, than those of the aged, because not usually so over-run with the briars and thorns of strong and deeply-rooted prejudices. The soul of man will not long remain empty; if it be not early stor'd with truth, 'twill be gradually stuff'd with errors. And as 'tis much more troublesome to alter and correct a writing full of nonsense and confusion, by much razing out and interlining, than to write a handsom piece of good sense on a blank paper; so it is abundantly harder to instruct or rectify a mind long prepossess'd with falshood, than to make deep impressions of truth on a soul more simple and unprejudic'd; which, if empty of knowledge, yet is not fill'd with error, which as it has not yet learn'd to judge right of things, so neither has it been much us'd to judge wrong; and if not happy enough to be well-stock'd with good notions, yet is not so unhappy as to be croud'd with bad ones.

Now seeing to capacitate us to serve God who is a *spirit*^y, and therefore will be serv'd *with our spirits*^z, without which *bodily exercise profiteth little*^a, there are many great

^x Mat. 18. 3, 4.

^y John 4. 24.

^z Rom. 1. 9.

^a 1 Tim. 4. 8.

truths to be learned; and tho he has promis'd the help of his holy spirit to reveal these to the simple ^b; yet seeing he requires us to be diligent in the investigation of truth ^c, and very attentive to the voice of reason and scripture to that end ^d, 'tis easy to see, by reflecting on what has been just now said, that the young, whose minds are yet unform'd, have a mighty advantage above the aged for learning the knowledge of the ways of God, and for obtaining a more copious and solid understanding of truth: so that we may well say with the prophet, tho perhaps he speaks in another sense, *Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are wean'd from the milk, and drawn from the breasts^e.*

(3.) Again, there is a certain tenderness of spirit attending our first years, and not ordinarily to be found afterwards, which renders conversion more feasible. The heart is more malleable, and more easily receives impressions from the promises and threatnings recorded in the word of God, and from the mercies and judgments distributed in the world by his providence. Therefore we find few persons, whose education has given them any tolerable means of the knowledge of divine things, who do not remember themselves to have been much affected in their

^b Prov. 8.^c Psal. 4. 4.^d John 5. 39.^e Isa. 28. 9.

youth in attending to the word of God, or in observing some remarkable passages of his providence. If deep conviction is a great step toward conversion, experience shews this is most easily wrought on one that is young : how often do we see such a one weep at a transient glance on death and judgment, in a sermon, or at a general reflection on the sufferings of Christ for sinners, while the seared consciences of those that have been long harden'd in sin, hold proof against the most pathetick and awakening discourses of the certainty of death, the dismal circumstances that attend a sinner at the approach of it, and the great consequences that depend on that amazing change, or against the most lively description of the most cruel and unexampled sufferings with which our blessed Saviour was tormented for our redemption ? That makes no impression on the adamantine heart of the latter, which is often found to effect a deep compunction of mind in the former ; and the eyes of the one can hardly be kept open by a discourse that dissolves those of the other into tears. The affections of fear and hope, joy, sorrow, compassion, and the like, more easily move the tender and ductile minds of youth, and consequently make way for lasting impressions of piety, to the purposes of which these affections, when guided and regulated by an enlighten'd mind, do mightily conduce.

(4.) The zeal and resolution in which the warm temper of youth engages them, for what they embrace, renders a thorow conversion to God more easy to them than to the old ; who by having either tasted much of the afflictions of the world themselves, or by having been witnesses to the miseries of many others, often retain so terrible an idea of worldly troubles, that the mortification and self-denial prescrib'd to the followers of Christ, gives them a strange disgust for a strictly religious life : besides, the abatement of their natural heat and vigor, a good degree of which is useful to any great enterprise, makes them with the sluggard continually complain of *a lion in the way*^f. But the young, who have not been so baulk'd with disappointments, nor felt or seen so many miseries, and who have also a great sense of honour, and are commonly ambitious of high atchievements, and disdain to have their attempts defeated, are hereby dispos'd more readily to take up the cross of Christ, and to *fight the good fight of faith, that they may lay hold on eternal life*^g. Add to this, that that disease of covetousness, which so often attends the aged, who from experience either in themselves or others, of the difficulty of getting and keeping, and the danger of losing, and the inconveniency of wanting the things of this world, become more tenacious of them then when they are

^f Prov. 22. 13.^g 1 Tim. 6. 12.

nearest the unavoidable necessity of parting with them ; that this disease, I say, which is *the root of all evil*^h, *which is idolatry*ⁱ, and therefore opposite to the true service of God, and which renders it almost *impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*^k, does not so usually reign among the young, who are rather apt to run into the contrary extreme : so that their motion in the ways of God is not clogg'd with this dead weight, which so mightily incumbers those whose hearts have taken deeper root in the earth. Thus we see how much more easy the work of conversion is likely to be, when we engage in it in our tender years, than if we defer it to old age.

But all this while I would not be thought to make the work of conversion, consider'd as the act of God, who alone can *turn a soul from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to himself*^l, to be more difficult in one subject than another, for all things are equally possible to him : but I have hereby made an essay to shew that the heart of an old sinner is a subject much more untractable and obstinate in itself, than that of one, who, by reason of his youth, is yet but a novice in vice ; that the work of mortification and sanctification is commonly begun with less difficulty, and carried on with more ease and speed, on the young than on the old ; and that

^h 1 Tim. 6. 10.

ⁱ Col. 3. 5.

^k Mat. 19. 24, 25, 26.

^l Acts 26. 18.

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a greater degree of grace is necessary to reform the latter than the former : and whether the Almighty will grant such an extraordinary measure of his grace to one that is grown old in wickedness, may well be doubted, as we shall shew hereafter.

Since then the work of conversion is of the greatest consequence, as it is for our truest interest both in this world and that to come, certainly it ought to be perform'd in youth, seeing that is the fittest season for it : as will farther appear,

2. In that much good is lost, and much evil contracted by deferring our conversion to old age ; but much evil, on the contrary, is prevented, and much good obtain'd, thro' the course of our days, by early turning to God.

(1.) Much sin is prevented, and consequently much spiritual good obtain'd by an early conversion, which will appear to be no small advantage : for seeing sin, as it is directly opposite to the pure nature of God, is the worst of evils, and seeing the excellency or vileness of a creature is to be measur'd by its likeness or contrariety to God, who possesses absolute perfection in himself ; it necessarily follows, that nothing can so deform a creature, nothing can so defile it, nothing can debase it so much, and set it at so great a distance from excellency and perfection, as sin does. It must then certainly be our interest to break off our sins by an early repentance ;

pentance; since every sinful act, and much more a continuance in a course of sin, does so much corrupt, debase, and deform the soul. And if we desire the meliorating of our nature, and would become more excellent creatures than we are, instead of degenerating and becoming worse; it highly concerns us to begin early to extirpate that which has stripp'd the soul of much of her intellectual, and, which is worse, of her moral excellency, and will render her by so much the more vile, by how much the longer we indulge it; and to devote ourselves betimes to religion and holiness, which is the principal beauty and glory of a rational soul, and that which chiefly makes a man resemble his creator.

(2.) Much sorrow and trouble is hereby prevented, and much joy and pleasure obtain'd and secur'd. For tho some examples may be found of wicked men, who in respect of their temporal prosperity for a little time, may be said to *spread themselves like a green bay-tree*^m; *not to be in trouble like other men, and to have more than heart could wish*ⁿ: yet God does not leave himself without witness of his displeasure against sin, in that he often *wounds the heads of his enemies, and the hairy scalps of them that go on still in their trespasses*^o, by signal judgments even in this world, as all places and ages can testify.

^m Psal. 37. 35.ⁿ Psal. 73. 5, 6, 7, &c.^o Psal. 68. 21.

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Nor has the divine providence been wanting to signalize the righteous by frequent instances of peculiar temporal blessings, which it has conferr'd on them. However, the anguish of a guilty and self-accusing conscience, under which the wicked often labour, together with the common and unavoidable afflictions of this world, which make a very deep impression on them, whose appetites are fierce and eager after sensual pleasure, their hope being only in this life, and whose passions soon fall into a violent ferment, because they want the holy art of allaying the heat of them by serious reflections on the sovereignty, justice, wisdom, and goodness of that God, whose providence governs the universe: these things, I say, occasion them abundance of grief and trouble, which one that becomes an early convert to holiness avoids; who besides the joyous testimony of a good conscience, that gives a relish to all his temporal comforts, and takes away the sting of all his outward trials, is so mortified to this world, and rais'd so far above the interests of it, by a lively hope of eternal bliss; and is so thorowly convinc'd of the good conduct of the divine governor of the world, that he finds no such great reluctancy in himself to submit to the will of God, when he is pleas'd to afflict him. In a word, if it be both *an evil and a bitter thing*^p, to go on in a course of sin; and if all God's *ways are*

^p Jer. 2. 19.

*ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace*⁹; it must needs be a mighty advantage to enter betimes into a walk so sweet and delightful.

3. The evils of old age, if we arrive to that, are aggravated by deferring conversion till then; but alleviated and render'd tolerable by an early piety. If he that neglects in the time of his youth and strength to make provision for the time of age and sickness, when he has a fair opportunity of doing it, is justly censur'd as inconsiderate and imprudent; because he takes not care to prepare that which might give him some relief then, when many infirmities will certainly encompass him, and the neglect of which will inhanse his misery: then to neglect to turn to God in youth is a folly of the grossest kind; because nothing can tend so much to support us under the pressure of the many evils that attend old age; nothing can tend to take off so much of the weight of that burden, as an early conversion; and nothing can make those miseries so grievous, as the neglect of it. For,

(1.) By an early conversion, a large stock of grace, and of experience, is treasur'd up, which mightily strengthens the soul under the burden of age: a long habit of mortification to sensual things, will render carnal pleasures insipid; and he that *dies daily*^r to the world, in the time of youth, when it

⁹ Prov. 3. 17.

^r 1 Cor. 15. 31.

appears

appears most amiable and charming, will not feel much regret in his mind, when he finds old age has almost quite taken away the relish of those perishing sweets; since reason and religion had long before allay'd the keenness of his appetite to them. The long and good use he has made of his spiritual senses, makes him patient under the decay of his natural ones. What tho, as Solomon phrases it, *the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves*^s; *and fears be in the way*^t? &c. How can this make him unhappy, whose *inward man has been renew'd day by day*, even before his *outward man decay'd*^t; who therefore is become *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*^u, which *strengthens the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees, and makes them that are of a fearful heart strong*^v? What if *those that look out at the windows be darken'd*^w? How can dimness, or even loss of sight, render him miserable, who thro' the course of his life has endeavour'd to be blind to those objects that might tempt him to sin, having *made a covenant with his eyes*^x, to guard himself from it; and has constantly pray'd that God would *turn them away from beholding vanity*^y? How can he be much concern'd at the want of natural light, who has been

^s Eccl. 12. 3.^t Ver. 5.^u 2 Cor. 4. 16.^v Eph. 6. 10.^v Isai. 35. 3, 4.^w Eccl. 12. 3.^x Job 31. 1.^y Psal. 119. 37.

Serm. II. *of an early conversion.*

long accustom'd to see things that are invifible by the piercing *eye of faith*^a? How can he be much difcontented at the decay of the once quick fenfation of his palate, or at the want of appetite to his food; who has fo often *tasted*^a, and ftill tastes *that the Lord is gracious*^b? Tho *all the daughters of mufick be brought low*^c, how fhould deafnefs be an intolerable grievance to him, who has often *heard*, and ftill hears the *ftill and fmall voice*^d of the fpirit of God fpeaking in his confcience, and *testifying with his fpirit that he is one of the children of God*^e? How can the obftructions that the organs of fpeech fuffer, which render his voice weak and unmufical, difcourage him, who knows, that as his praifes and prayers have often been *melodious*^f in the ears of God, fo they ftill are very pleafant to him^g, who chiefly minds the tunable frame of the heart? And tho *the fun and the light, and the moon and the ftars be darken'd*^h, &c. how can the infirmities that impair the underftanding and judgment, the fancy and memory, &c. be infupportable to him, who has long underftood the *great myftery of godlinefs*ⁱ, fo as to know *the only true God, and Jefus Chrift whom he has fent, which is life eternal*^k: who has

^a Heb. 11. 1. and ver. 27.

^a Pfal. 34. 8.

^b 1 Pet. 2. 3.

^c Eccl. 12. 4.

^d 1 Kings 19. 12.

^e Rom. 8. 16.

^f Cant. 2. 14.

^g Prov. 15. 8.

^h Eccl. 12. 2.

ⁱ 1 Tim. 3. 16.

^k John 17. 3.

receiv'd

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receiv'd an indelible impressi^{on} of this knowledge in his mind ¹; and has the *Law of God* deeply engraven *on his heart* ^m: and whose long experience of the divine goodness, makes him with holy confidence still say, as the apostle did, *I know whom I have believed* ⁿ; and as the aged psalmist, *thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth* ^o? who, however weak his memory is as to other things, yet still *remembers his creator*, and *will not forget his word* ^p. Nay, tho all the evils and infirmities of old age, which the wise man enumerates after our text, attack him, and threaten a speedy dissolution of the frame of his body, how can this despirit him, who has long *groan'd* ^q for deliverance from that *earthly tabernacle* ^r, that he might be rid of those remains of sin that lurk in it; and has often wish'd that this veil of mortal flesh were rent asunder, because he knows it hinders him from *seeing God face to face*; who has so familiariz'd the grave to himself, by frequent meditations on the victory his Saviour has obtain'd over it ^s, and is so well persuaded of that blessed resurrection with which his *lively hope* ^t has long acquainted him, that he can look into the gloomy *valley of the shadow of death* ^t without consternation, and cheer-

¹ 1 John 5. 20.

^m Jer. 31. 33.

ⁿ 2 Tim. 1. 12.

^o Psal. 71. 5.

^p Psal. 119. 16.

^q Rom. 7. 24.

^r 2 Cor. 5. 1—8.

^s 1 Cor. 15. 54—57.

^t 1 Pet. 1. 3.

^t Psal. 23. 4.

fully commit his spirit into the hands of God, as his faithful creator^u; who as he has guided him by his counsel, so, he knows, will receive him to glory^v?

But on the other side; if conversion be deferr'd to old age, these and the like advantages of a long exercise of grace and of a large spiritual experience being wanting, how difficult will it be for a weak mind and a languishing body to bear up under those pressing miseries that will then attend them? And it will be no small affliction to a late penitent, even after his conversion, to think on his imprudent neglect of early laying up this spiritual provision, against those evil days of age and weakness, when the soul stands in so much need of it.

(2.) An early conversion has greater characters of sincerity and truth than a late one; and thereby administers great ease and comfort amidst the infirmities of age. For, as the true peace and comfort of the soul result from the good and safe posture wherein she finds herself; so according to the evidence or obscurity of the proofs a man finds in himself of the reality of his conversion to God, the more stable or wavering is his hope and comfort. Now those that have been converted in their youth, have usually much clearer evidences of the truth of their conversion, than they who have been reclaim'd from sin by a late repentance: and there-

^u 1 Pet. 4. 19.

^v Psal. 73. 24.

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fore the joy of the former commonly far surpasses that of the latter.

How often does the disturb'd and doubtful mind of a late penitent, thus commune with herself: I find indeed an unwonted sorrow in myself on the account of sin; but how shall I be assur'd that 'tis a *godly sorrow, that works a repentance to salvation, not to be repented of*^w? Is it not wholly from a fear of the evil of punishment, and not at all from the sense of the evil of sin? not because I have violated the law of God, but only because I have render'd myself obnoxious to the curse of it? Is it not rather because I have weaken'd my body, and hasten'd old age by my vices, than because I have defil'd my soul, and enfeebled her powers by them? I feel in myself some abhorrence and aversion to the sins in which I formerly took pleasure: but is this the effect of the sickness of my soul, or of the distempers of my body^x? Do I really loath my former disorders, and is temperance my choice? Is it not rather the weakness of my appetite, and the decay of my palate, that makes me abstemious? I delight not in sensual mirth and jollity as formerly: but may I not justly question, whether this does not more proceed from the weakness of my fancy, than from the tenderness of my conscience, and the rectitude of my will? I seem somewhat mortified to the things of the world: but is

^w 2 Cor. 7. 10.

| ^x Mat. 9. 12.

not this rather a kind of natural than a moral death? a dying to the world of necessity and not of choice? Do I forsake it because 'tis unworthy of my love; and not rather because it has first forsaken me, and is incapable of affording me its former pleasures, now the evil days of old age have overtaken me? I find in my soul an earnest desire after holiness: is it because I take delight in pleasing God, or only because I fear to suffer the weight of his displeasure? Is it because I have a mind to live a holy life, now when the best and almost the whole of my time is spent; or only that I may *die the death of the righteous, and that my last end may be like his*? I am now willing to devote myself to the service of God: but why have I not done it long before, when I had time and strength, and other advantages with which to serve him? Is it not rather to serve a turn of my own, than to serve him, that I offer myself so late to his service? Have I not reason to doubt whether I am sincerely willing to chuse my blessed lord, as my head and ruler, as well as my sanctuary and saviour? And whether I am willing to be purified as well as redeem'd, to be sanctified by his grace, as well as justified by his righteousness? *The heart is deceitful above all things*²; and how shall I be assur'd that I do not deceive myself about the safety of my soul?

¹ Numb. 23. 10.² Jer. 17. 9.

These and the like thoughts often occasion great hesitations in the mind of an aged convert, and make him doubt of the sincerity of his heart, and of the security of his state.

Whereas, on the other hand, he who after an initiation in the service of God in youth, and a proficiency in it thro' the time of his strength, is at last arriv'd to a good old age, may greatly solace himself in scanning over the marks and proofs of the truth and reality of his conversion, which are great and numerous.

He deeply mourn'd for sin at an age when sorrow and pensiveness seem most unseasonable in the judgment of the world ; and when the warmth of the imagination and the briskness of the senses dispose most to carnal mirth : he loath'd sin, when it seem'd most charming, and deny'd himself its sensual pleasures, at an age when they have the highest gust ; and when their evil consequences almost quite disappear, thro' their great supposed distance. He forsook the world, when 'twas just spreading its charms before him, and making its court to him after the most obliging manner. He *hunger'd and thirsted after righteousness*^a, at a time when it had the most affliction and bitterness attending it ; and dedicated himself to God then, when he had a large prospect of hard services and sufferings to undergo for his sake.

^a Mat. 6. 3.

And accordingly his life since his conversion yields a multitude of instances that prove the sincerity of it. The proof of his faith in God and of his love to him, has been like that of gold and silver in the melting furnace, amidst various temptations. He has had occasion to give ample proofs of his fidelity to the *captain of his salvation*^b, by having long warr'd under his banner: and has reason to believe himself to have been truly converted in his youth; since all the flattering sweets and pleasures of the world could never seduce him, nor all the threatening frowns and troubles of it terrify him into a change of his resolution for the service of his God. And his having held out so long, gives him hope that *he shall hold out to the end*^c: and since he finds his faith has on it the character of *unfeigned*^d, his joy must needs abound, when he considers, that he that is the *author of that faith, is the finisher of it* too^e; that he who long ago began, and hath long cherish'd the work of grace in his soul, *will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ*^f: and that as he has the evident signs of faith in the sanctification of his heart^g, so he shall have the end of it too in the salvation of his soul. And it hence follows,

(3.) That an early conversion furnishes old age with comfortable reflections on time

^b Heb. 2. 10.

^c Heb. 3. 14.

^d 2 Tim. 1. 5.

^e Heb. 12. 2.

^f Philip. 1. 6.

^g 1 Pet. 1. 9.

past ; and on the contrary, the thoughts of an ill-spent life are then most grievous, when we are near the close of it. What a dreadful thing must it be for an old man, *whose bones are full of the sins of his youth*^h, to look back upon his former course of life ! Suppose him a late penitent of the *eleventh hour*ⁱ, and that God is pleas'd even then to indulge him a pardon ; with what horror will he review his life ! what a loathsome sink of abominations must he rake into ! with what innumerable evils will he see himself encompass'd ! and with what a mighty weight will they press his soul : Is it likely that God, whom he has so long *wearied with his iniquities*^k, and press'd with his sins, *as a cart is press'd with sheaves*^l, will shew him mercy now, without giving him a taste how bitter as well as how evil a thing sin is^m ? and without shewing him, that if he be sav'd, it shall be *so as by fire*ⁿ ? Is it strange if that God, to whose calls he has been long deaf, and from whose reproofs and counsels he has so often turned away, should suffer him to call a while in the distress and bitterness of his soul, before he condescends to give him answer of peace ?

And seeing it is the ordinary course of the almighty, when he converts men, first to impress their minds with great horror from the sense of sin, as well to make 'em loath

^h Job 20. 11.

ⁱ Mat. 20. 6.

^k Mal. 2. 17.

^l Amos 2. 13.

^m Jer. 2. 19.

ⁿ 1 Cor. 3. 15.

and consequently to forsake their vices, as to make them highly value his favour, and adore his pardoning grace ; it seems necessary in an ordinary way, that an old and harden'd sinner should undergo the *terror of the Lord* to a high degree, because the long time he has spent in the service of sin, gives him so great an occasion of remorse, when his conscience is once enlighten'd and awaken'd ; and because to extirpate these long and deep habits of sin, there is need of a kind of violent turn in the soul. For as the evil spirit tore the poor man in the ^p gospel, when forc'd to leave him ; so 'tis not usual that sin leaves a Man, of whose soul it has had a long possession, without occasioning great convulsions of mind, and, as it were, rending the soul in pieces : and how hard will this be to be endur'd, at a time when *the spirit of a man can scarce bear the common infirmities of age* ? *Who then can bear a wounded spirit* ?

And when these terrors of mind are over, and these pangs of conscience that give hope of a *new birth*^r are succeeded with some peace that follows that happy change ; yet who knows how far it may be allay'd, and how often interrupted by reiterated scruples and fears ? and how long the soul that has been so violently mov'd may retain her doubtful vibrations, after such astonishing

^o 2 Cor. 5. 11.

^p Mark 1. 26.

| ^q Prov. 18. 14.
| ^r John 3. 3.

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impressions of divine wrath, in a time when even natural infirmities render the mind weak and timorous^f; and when the king of terrors, who daily expects the aged, loudly alarms the tremulous soul to prepare speedily to pass into eternity, the near approach of which mighty change must needs add terror to every scruple; and when satan, a subtle adversary, of whose devices, for want of experience, he is in a great measure ignorant^g, shoots his fiery and invenom'd darts^h to weaken the hope, and to heighten the fears, and to increase the troubles of the soul? who knows, I say, what gloomy and dark intervals these things may occasion? 'Tis true, God can surmount all these difficulties by proportionate effusions of his grace, and can fill such a soul, if he pleases, with unspeakable joy. But is it likely that he should indulge those with the highest and most uncommon privileges, that hold out longest in rebellion against him? And may such reasonably expect that he will go out of his ordinary methods to meet them, who have all their life past gone astray from him? and that he will bestow the sealing evidences of his holy spirit on them to a degree which he does not always allow his early disciples, and those that have long follow'd him? May it not rather be thought, that *tho* God should *forgive their iniquities, he'll take vengeance of*

^f Eccl. 12. 5.

^g 2 Cor. 2. 11.

^h Eph. 6. 16.

their

their inventions ^v? that tho they should *die in the Lord* ^u, they'll set in a cloud, and go to the grave with Hezekiah's lamentation, when under the sense of the wrath of God, and under punishment for his sins. *I reckon'd, says he, till morning, that as a lion he will break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter, I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward, O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me. What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it; I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul* ^x. And with that of Job; *Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth* ^y. Is it strange, if, as they have consum'd their time in sin, and have grown old in wickedness, their eyes should be *consum'd with grief, and wax old with sorrow* ^z? and if, as they have wallow'd long in vice, so they should be made to swim long in tears, and *to water their couches with continual weeping* ^a?

But what a comfortable review of his life may an early convert take in old age? what joy to look back on that solemn oblation of the first-fruits of his time which he made to God, and on the early favour which God express'd to him! *to remember the kindness of*

^v Psal. 93. 3.

^u Rev. 14. 13.

^{ex} Isa. 38. 13, 14, 15.

^y Job 13. 26.

^z Psal. 6. 7.

^a Ver. 6.

his youth, and the love of his espousals ^b, which even God himself delights to remember ! to turn over the large volumes of his experience, to look on past temptations and conflicts ; these reflections will give him a pleasure as much beyond that of an antient sailor, when he thinks on the many rocks and sands and storms he has escap'd ; and that of a valiant soldier, when he recollects how many dangers he has past, and how many victories he has obtain'd, as he conceives the interest of the soul is beyond that of the body, and that eternal life is to be valued above temporal. With what admiration mix'd with joy will he be fill'd, when he calls to mind what God has done for him ! For tho the failings of his life, *since no man lives and sins not* ^c, give him occasion of godly sorrow and humiliation, yet these will not hinder a religious joy from reigning in his soul, from his happy experience of the mercy of his God ; which will make him with the apostle ^d, *glory in the grace of God* in the midst of his contrition ; and tho in himself *he is nothing* ^e, will make him say with the psalmist, *by my God I have run thro' a troop, and by my God I have leaped over a wall* ^f ! With what delight will he recollect the signal favours of the divine providence that beautify the history of his life ! how his God *has*

^b Jer. 2. 2.^c 2 Chron. 6. 36. Eccl. 7.

20.

^d Rom. 7. 24, 25.^e 2 Cor. 12. 9, 11.^f Psal. 18. 29.

spread his table, and fill'd his cup in the presence of his enemies^g; and has made both his rod and his staff to comfort him^h. With how much pleasure will he turn his mind to the house of God, to think how often he has gone thither with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holidayⁱ! how oft he has beheld the beauty of the Lord, while he has been inquiring in his temple^k! how he has been stay'd with flagons, and comforted with apples, when sick of love^l to his Saviour! how he has sat down with great delight under his shadow, while his fruit has been sweet to his taste^m! how he has been satiated as with marrow and fatnessⁿ, when his soul has hungered after righteousness^o! how he has often disburden'd his mind by pouring out his complaints into the bosom of his heavenly father! how he has often receiv'd an answer of peace, sometimes beyond his hope, nay beyond his desire, and sometimes even before his prayer^p! what precious seasons of communion with God he has enjoy'd, when retired into some corner alone to worship him! what fervent desires he has then felt! what earnest aspirations of his soul after him! what smiles of the divine love have on such occasions chear'd his spirit! what sealings of the holy

^g Psal. 23. 5.

^h Ver. 4.

ⁱ Psal. 42. 4.

^k Psal. 27. 4.

^l Cant. 2. 5.

^m Ver. 3.

ⁿ Psal. 63. 5.

^o Mat. 5. 6.

^p Isa. 65. 24.

spirit ^a have assur'd his faith ! what prospect he has had of *him that is invisible* ^r ! what joy *unspeakable and full of glory* ^f !

Such reflections will even make the soul forget her temporal afflictions, and render the burden of age supportable. These thoughts will obviate fears and temptations, and inspire the mind with holy courage and resolution, and furnish her with arguments for prayer, like that of the psalmist : *I will go in the strength of the Lord God ; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth ; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed ; O God forsake me not, &c.* ^s

In a word, tho every man has occasion to be humbled for his sins, and that in every part of his life, it must needs be a great, and next to the light of God's countenance thro' the face of Jesus Christ, the greatest occasion of joy in the world ; when a man can lie down in the grave in peace, with the satisfaction of having made religion the great business of his life, of having *serv'd his generation faithfully by the will of God* ^t, having from his youth *exercised himself in this, to have a conscience always void of offence both toward God and toward men* ^v : when at the shutting up of his days, he can, by the grace

^a 2 Cor. 1. 22. Eph. 1. 13. | ^s Psal. 71. 16, 17, 18.

^r Heb. 11. 27.

^f 1 Pet. 1. 8.

| ^t Acts 13. 36.

| ^v Acts 24. 16.

of God, safely appeal both to him and to men, as aged Samuel did ; *Behold — I am old and gray-headed — and I have walk'd before you from my childhood unto this day : behold here I am ; witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed : whose ox have I taken ? or whose ass have I taken ? or whom have I defrauded ? whom have I oppressed ? or of whose hand have I received any bribe, to blind my eyes therewith ? &c.* And as he that has serv'd God from his youth can look back with pleasure, so he may look forward with exceeding joy. For,

(4.) An early conversion furnishes old age with much more comfort than a late one, in that it usually gives a brighter and more glorious prospect of reward in the other life.

As this life is not valuable, but as it may be improv'd in order to a better ; so the strong and well-grounded hope of eternal bliss in the world to come, is that which sweetens the most bitter afflictions of a christian here, and makes him as much more happy as he is *more excellent than his neighbour* ^w ; whereas if his hope were only in this life, he would be of all men the most miserable ^x. And a man's true happiness in this world is therefore to be measur'd by the strength and liveliness of his faith and hope for the blessings of the other ; for by these he receives an earnest of the heavenly pos-

^u 1 Sam. 12. 2, 3.

^w Prov. 12. 26.

^x 1 Cor. 15. 19.

session,

session, and has some foretastes of that glory, with which he expects in a little time to be fully satisfied. For every one knows that there is pleasure in hoping for any thing that we think will add to our happiness, especially when that hope is thought to be well-founded, and the things expected of great consequence, and speedily to be obtain'd. With what an extraordinary joy then must the hope of everlasting bliss and glory inspire him that firmly believes he shall suddenly enjoy it ! And that this hope makes a saint the most happy man even in this life is evident, some of the enemies of religion themselves being judges. 'Tis worth remarking, that an eminent person^y, who was one of the greatest sinners, as well as one of the greatest penitents of this age, even while he maintain'd his atheistical principles, and led a most flagitious course of life, confess'd, "That
 " whether the business of religion was true
 " or not, he thought those who had the
 " persuasions of it, and lived so that they
 " had quiet in their consciences, and believ'd
 " God govern'd the world, and acquiesced
 " in his providence, and had the hope
 " of an endless blessedness in another state,
 " the happiest men in the world : and said,
 " he would give all that he was master of,
 " to be under those persuasions, and to have
 " the supports and joys that must needs flow

^y *The late earl of Rochester ; see his life written by Dr. Burnet, p. 68.*

" from

“ from them.” So just a thought had he even then of the joy of a good conscience, and the pleasure which the bare expectation of future glory in heaven occasions, that he thought it far out-ballanc’d the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. And thus does religion triumph over her enemies, extorting from their own mouths a plain acknowledgment of what the psalmist assures, that *happy is the people whose God is the Lord*^z.

Now it cannot be expected, that a late convert should have an equal portion of this hope and joy, with one that *has fear’d the Lord from his youth*^a. The former is commonly exercis’d with greater and more frequent doubts concerning his interest in eternal glory than the latter ; and the eye of his faith is often too weak to read his evidences for it ; because, as we have shewn before, he is apt to question the truth of his regeneration, without which, he knows, *no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven*^b. And this makes him often thus reason with himself : *Eye indeed hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have enter’d into the heart of man the things which God hath prepar’d for them that love him*^c : but I fear I shall fall short of the glory of God, because I question the sincerity of my love to him. Is not this *fulness of joy*^d reserv’d for them that have nauseated

^z Psal. 144. 15.

^a 1 Kings 18. 12.

^b John 3. 3, 4, 5.

^c 1 Cor. 2. 9.

^d Psal. 16. 11.

the pleasures of this world, with which I have glutted my sensual appetite, even from my infancy? Are not those rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God, only to refresh his diligent servants that have borne the burden and heat of the day in labouring and suffering for him? May not I, who have spent my days in vanity and sin, *in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness*^c, and who now am incapacitated either to do or suffer much for God, just at the period of my days, justly fear being excluded from the participation of this bliss? Is it likely that these joys which are so spiritual and refined, will be poured into such a soul as mine, when parted from this languishing body, which has been debauch'd and corrupted for so many years, with the base and sordid delights of sin? Or may I presume to deposit this vile and mouldering carcass in the grave, in hope of having it render'd a glorious body *at the resurrection of the just*^f; when I have thro' the best of my time abus'd it to the vilest purposes of sensuality and vice? Shall these eyes that have so often been *full of adultery*^g be admitted to see the Lord in glory? And this tongue be tun'd to praise him with sacred anthems in heaven, which has so long lodg'd in it *a world of iniquity*^h, and desecrated his holy name by profane oaths and blasphemies on earth? That these feet that have

^c Rom. 13. 13.^f Luke 14. 14.^g 2 Pet. 2. 14.^h James 3. 6.

been swift to attend the places of debauchery, and the *assemblies of the ungodly*ⁱ, shall stand within the gates of the *heavenly Jerusalem*^k, and find a welcome place in the *general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven*^l? Or that these hands that have so long been executing acts of unrighteousness here, shall be eternally lifted up with praises, and employ'd in applauding the name and works of God there?

May not I more reasonably be afraid, that my soul should fall *into the hands of the living God*^m, than chearfully commit it to himⁿ, now my days are near expiring? and justly apprehend that the expence of my time in wickedness will be punished with an eternity of misery? and that after I have so long walk'd in the ways of sin, I must now at last lie down in the grave in sorrow^o? And O how pungent is that sorrow, while my trembling soul looks into the consequences of such a death! for, if I die in my sins, not only am I depriv'd of all this happiness, which I have been viewing at a distance, but must sink into that abyss of misery, where a *never-dying worm*^p, and an *unquenchable lake of fire*^q are the just and dreadful rewards of a sinful life.

ⁱ Psal. 1. 1.^k Psal. 122. 2.^l Heb. 12. 22, 23.^m Heb. 10. 31.ⁿ 1 Pet. 4. 19.^o Isa. 50. 11.^p Mark 9. 44.^q Rev. 20. 14, 15.

These and such like jealousies and fears, carry so specious an appearance of reason with them, that without a more than common measure of faith, they must needs give the soul a great deal of disquiet. And 'tis no wonder if the righteous and holy God suffer the mind often to labour under these troublesome thoughts, as a proper method both to embitter sin to one that has been long accustomed to indulge it, and to testify for the incouragement of holiness, that he reserves some peculiar rewards even in this life, for them that have serv'd him with a peculiar zeal and constancy; and that *full assurance of faith* and hope^r, and a clear prospect of those *invisible things*^t *which he has laid up for those that love him*, is a blessing wherewith he seldom crowns any but those who have been for some considerable part of their lives, gradually raising *their affections*, and fixing them *on things above*^s, habituating themselves to converse in heaven, and *fighting the good fight of faith, that they might lay hold on eternal life*^t. For since God is pleas'd to propose rewards as motives to his service, 'tis natural to conclude, that the consoling hope of these rewards, which is also a reward itself, does ordinarily bear proportion to the time and degree of our obedience: and therefore he that has long devoted himself to the service of God, as he has commonly a clearer

^r Heb. 10. 22. Heb. 6. 11. | ^s Col. 3. 2.

^t Heb. 11. 1.

| ^t 1 Tim. 6. 12.

prospect

prospect of future bliss, and of the security of his interest in it ; so to advance his joy still to a higher point, he has reason to expect a distinguishing reward in the celestial glory ; that if he has serv'd his Lord much in his church, which is his *kingdom on earth*, he shall not be *the least in the kingdom of heaven*^u : for tho he has no ground to hope to be rewarded for his works on the account of debt, because when he has done his best *he is but an unprofitable servant*^v ; yet, since God himself has promised it, he may believe, that he shall be rewarded according to his works, on the account of grace^w. Thus as the early convert looks back upon all the sufferings he has endur'd for the sake of his divine master with comfort, *as on waters that are past away*^x ; so the thoughts of these raise both his desire and expectation earnestly to look for a distinguishing recompence of future glory.

And how unexpressible is that joy which a holy man feels, when the eye of faith can with a great degree of strength penetrate, and with equal steadiness contemplate the unseen glories of the heavenly state, as firmly interested therein ! What joy does the early convert often taste, especially toward the close of his days, when he approaches *the mark*^y of his long desire and hope ; when he considers that as he has been long labouring

^u Mat. 5. 19.^v Luke 17. 10.^w Mat. 16. 27.^x Job 11. 16.^y Phil. 3. 13, 14.

to increase in the knowledge of God, he shall suddenly *see him as he is*; and that as he has been long endeavouring after a conformity to him, he shall not only see him, but *be like him* too ^z: that as all the powers of his soul have been dedicated to his service, so they shall be in a little time intirely fill'd with his glory, and incessantly employ'd in his praise; and as the members of his body have been *fellow-servants* ^a of righteousness with the faculties of his soul, so their refin'd matter and elegant form ^b at the resurrection shall render them fit to become their partners in glory.

Thus have we made it evident, that the time of our youth is in many respects the best and fittest for the great work of remembring our maker, and of engaging in his service; and this, even upon the supposition of our being sure of obtaining an opportunity of repenting in old age, tho we should not reform before.

But we have farther to shew, that as the time of youth is the best, so it may be, and is most likely to be the only season wherein it will be possible for us to devote ourselves to our creator, or wherein our service will be acceptable to him: which gives us the clearest proof of all, of the danger and folly of neglecting to consecrate to him the morning of our days. But the consideration of this we shall refer to another discourse.

^z 1 John 3. 2.

^a Rom. 6. 13.

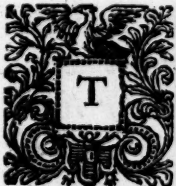
| ^b 1 Cor. 15. 42, 43, 44.

The reasonableness and advantages of an early conversion to God demonstrated.

S E R M O N III.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

4.  O the disadvantages of delaying conversion till the evil days of old age, and the advantages of devoting one's self to the service of God in youth, on which we have already insisted, we have this one farther consideration to add, *viz.* That

4. Our eternal interest is extremely hazarded by deferring conversion to old age, and best secur'd by an early change. For,

(1.) We are always uncertain of future time for the accomplishment of this important work. Our time is at the disposal of our maker, and he has not entrusted our lavish hands with the whole stock of this precious treasure, but only suffers it to run thro' them by moments; so that we can recal no past, nor can we command any future time: 'tis therefore our business to improve the present, being ignorant how long the divine bounty will continue our time in this world. Upon this account the wise man instructs us well, not to *boast ourselves of to morrow*, seeing we *know not what a day may bring forth*^c: and the prophet Isaiah reprehends the folly of those that incourage one another to go on in sinful excesses, by profanely promising themselves, that *to morrow should be as the present day, and much more abundant*^d. The apostle James also shews the vanity of such foolish presumptions: *Go to now*, says he, *ye that say, to day, or to morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away: for that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that*^e.

And experience, as well as scripture, assures us, that *every man walks in a vain shew*^f;

^c Prov. 27. 1.

^d Isa. 56. 12.

^e James 4. 13, 14, 15.

^f Psal. 39. 6.

and

and that *man*, in this respect, even at his best estate is altogether vanity^g: that some die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet; their breasts being full of milk, and their bones moisten'd with marrow: as others die in the bitterness of their souls, and never eat with pleasure: that they lie down alike in the dust, and the worms cover them^h. 'Tis evident to every one's observation that youth does not exempt us from death, nor insure us to any farther portion of time than what we at present enjoy: but on the contrary, that the far greater number of mankind go early to the grave; and for one that reaches to old age, a multitude fall short of it.

Nor is it an uncommon thing for persons of the most vigorous and hardy constitution of body to be suddenly snatch'd away into the other world by some violent disease, or otherwise: for we are obnoxious to so many fatal strokes, and so frail is the texture of our earthly tabernacles, that some of the least and most contemptible things in the world are capable of giving them a mortal shock; and the very pores of the skin sometimes prove breaches wide enough for the king of terrors to enterⁱ.

This is well enough known, and often enough thought on by the generality of men, to engage them to use precautions to secure themselves or their posterity, as much as they

^g Ver. 5.

^h Job 21. 23, 24, 25.

ⁱ Job 18. 14.

can, from the prejudice their temporal affairs might otherwise receive from sudden death. And the rate at which an estate for life is usually valued, sufficiently shews, that to such purposes as these men need not be *taught to know their end*, and the *measure* of their *days* what it is, that they *may know how frail* they are ^k.

And if there be no comparison between earth and heaven, between the uncertain wealth of this world and the durable riches of the other, between this life and that which is to come ; then 'tis infinitely more imprudent for a man to neglect but for a moment, *to make his calling and election sure*^l, whatever future time here his youth and strength may seem to promise, than for him carelessly to suffer the security of his temporal estate to depend merely on the uncertain life of another man, when he need not put it to that hazard ; or to expose his posterity to poverty and misery, by omitting to make due provision for them against his own mortality, when he has a fair opportunity of doing it.

'Tis folly and madness to leave that undone to day, which must be done at one time or other, or else we are ruin'd for ever, and which may, for ought we know, be impossible to be perform'd to morrow ; to neglect to improve the present time in doing that on which our eternal bliss depends, when the precious opportunity of doing it may the

^k Psal. 39. 4.

^l 2 Pet. 1. 10.

next moment by sudden death or some stupifying disease become irreparable.

Even the impious atheist, and the profane epicure *make speedy provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*^m, from the consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of their time in this world; and seek to gratify and indulge their senses to day, because they are not sure of doing it to morrow. *Let us eat and drink, say they, for to morrow we shall die*ⁿ: and they have so far reason on their side, in that they act in conformity to their principles, because their hope is only in this life, and they profess not to expect another. How unaccountably stupid then are they, who tho they believe there is a future state after this life, and tho they *know that they shall die*^o, and that they know not how soon, yet in their vain imaginations *put the evil day of death afar off*^p, and defer from time to time the great work of *laying up treasure in heaven*^q, till the season of doing it is irretrievably lost! And in vain is so precious a talent as time *put into the hands of such fools, who have no heart to improve it*^r.

If the wise man argues rightly when he excites to diligence even in the ordinary affairs of this life, because of the speedy approach of death, this reason infinitely multiplies its force when apply'd to our present

^m Rom. 13. 14.

ⁿ Isa. 22. 13. 1 Cor. 15. 32.

^o Eccl. 9. 5.

^p Amos 6. 3. Ezek. 12. 27.

^q Mat. 19. 21.

^r Prov. 17. 16.

purpose,

purpose, and may therefore most fitly be used to stir us up to an early and diligent improvement of the time of youth in the service of God: *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do*, says he, *do it with thy might*; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest^f.—For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them^g. 'Tis therefore our prudence and interest to work while it is day, seeing we know not how soon the night may come upon us, wherein no man can work^h. But farther,

(2.) If our time were in our own hands, as it is in the hand of God^v, so that we could extend it many years beyond the ordinary course of life; or if we had the certain fore-knowledge^w of the limits which the Almighty has fix'd to our days; if we knew the number of our months^x, and any of us could read ourselves antient in the book of the divine decrees, this could by no means justify or excuse our negligence, if we should thereupon presume to delay our conversion till towards the close of our time, because of the uncertainty of the continuance of the day of God's patience and grace. For as the days of our lives are uncertain, so is the day of grace

^f Eccl. 9. 10.

^g Ver. 12.

^h John 9. 4.

^v Psal. 31. 15.

^w Job 7. 1.

^x Job 14. 5.

too ; and as those are very short, so this may be much shorter, and we may soon out-live *the time of our visitation*^y from heaven, and so *the things that belong to our peace*, may be finally *hidden from our eyes*^z.

It is infinite mercy in the great and holy God to give a wretched sinner one smile, one single offer of reconciliation ; and 'tis great ingratitude and folly in a guilty creature but once to refuse to hearken to so gracious a call. But what words can express the goodness and condescension of the Almighty to a miserable worm, when he importunately repeats the terms of peace to invite, nay to *beseech* him to be reconciled to him^a ! And how provoking must the guilt of that sinner be, who, after all this kindness of God toward him, stops his ears at his counsel, like *the deaf adder that will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely*^b ! And therefore it is not to be wondred at, if his abused patience and mercy be turn'd into indignation and wrath. And thus it often comes to pass, *because men receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved ; God sends them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye, and that they all may be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness*^c. And the word of God, instead of being *the favour of life unto life*, be-

^y Luke 19. 44.

^z Ver. 42.

^a 2 Cor. 5. 20.

^b Psal. 58. 4, 5.

^c 2 Thess. 2. 10, 11, 12.

108 *The reasonableness and advantages*

comes *the savour of death unto death* to them ^d. Thus the righteous God *sets his face against* them that *stiffen their necks against* him ^e, and *hardens their hearts* in judgment, who *themselves* have *hardened them* against the offers of mercy ^f. If the declining church of Ephesus was threaten'd with the removal of her *candlestick* ^g, in case she refus'd to hearken to the voice of our Saviour, when he call'd her to repentance; how justly may every impenitent sinner fear the speedy ending of the day of grace to him? And if at one sermon of the apostle Paul's, as some of the Jews his auditors were converted, so others of them were judicially sealed up in *hardness of heart*, and *blindness of mind* ^h, the most dreadful punishment on this side hell; and the gospel, which they had rejected and despised, was suddenly snatch'd from them to be carried to the ignorant heathen; is it not still to be fear'd, that they who defer to yield themselves *to the obedience of faith* ⁱ, when the glad tidings of salvation have been again and again published to them, may utterly *fall short* of happiness by this their obstinacy and *unbelief* ^k? And if *profane Esau*, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right, was afterwards rejected, when he would have inherited the blessing, and found no place of repen-

^d 2 Cor. 2. 16.

^e Jer. 44. 10, 11. 2 Chron. 30. 8. Nehem. 9. 16.

^f Rom. 9. 18. Exod. 8. 15. Acts 19. 9.

^g Rev. 2. 4, 5.

^h Acts 28. 23—28.

ⁱ Rom. 1. 5.

^k Heb. 3. 19.

tance,

*tance, tho he sought it carefully with tears¹; how justly may God reject them, who have often resisted the spirit of grace^m? and suffer them to mourn at lastⁿ without pity in their greatest distress, who have often griev'd the holy spirit^o in gratifying their sinful inclinations? And seeing he has said his spirit shall not always strive with men^p, who knows how soon he may shut up his tender mercies in displeasure^q against those that have long rebell'd against him; and swear in his wrath that they shall never enter into his rest^r? how soon he may accomplish that terrible threatening he has pronounc'd against the impenitent, *He that hardens his neck, being often reprov'd, shall suddenly be destroy'd, and that without remedy^s?**

(3.) There is not only a possibility or a bare likelihood of the expiration of the day of grace, to those that spend the best of their time in rebellion against their maker, before they arrive at old age; but on the contrary, there is only a possibility and no likelihood, that the holy Spirit should continue to strive with them at the winding up of their days, who thro' the greatest part of their time have resisted his counsels and motions. And 'tis not only reason that furnishes us with proofs of this from the sovereignty and justice of

¹ Heb. 12. 16, 17.

^m Acts 7. 51.

ⁿ Prov. 5. 11.

^o Eph. 4. 30.

^p Gen. 6. 3.

^q Psal. 77. 9.

^r Psal. 95. 11. Heb. 3. 18.

^s Prov. 29. 1.

God,

God, consider'd with the great aggravations of impenitence under the means of grace, or the threatnings in the holy scripture that plainly include this danger, as appears from the last head insisted on; but experience confirms this, and evinces that what our Saviour says of rich men, may with as much reason and force be applied to old sinners, namely, that *it is easier for a camel to pass thro' the eye of a needle, than for such to enter into the kingdom of heaven*^s. And if this saying seem severe to any in respect of these last, as it did to the disciples of Christ in regard of the other^t, it cannot justly be softned with any farther addition than that which our Saviour subjoin'd, to qualify his words in the first case, *viz. that nothing is impossible with God*^u. It is a thing possible, because all things are so to God, but very unlikely, and not to be often expected; and when at any time it comes to pass, God may be said to make a step out of the ordinary method of the dispensation of his grace; somewhat like that he makes, when he works a miracle in the sphere of nature. In this matter, I say, one may safely appeal to experience. Let any one that is acquainted with a considerable number of pious and aged persons, ask each of them from what time he dates his conversion; and for one that has had that happy change wrought on his soul since he became old, he

^s Mat. 19. 24.^t Ver. 25.^u Ver. 26.

shall find many that turn'd to God in the strength and verdure of their youth.

And can there be a greater instance given then of the *deceitfulness of sin*^x, and of the bewitching power it has over the common sense and reason of mankind, than we have in the vain promises of repentance in old age, with which so many flatter themselves, and by which they seem to hope to render God propitious to them? Is any kind of folly so great in its degree, or so dangerous in its consequences as this; for mortals to lull themselves asleep in sin, and sing a stupifying *requiem* to their souls, while they hang on the brink of eternal perdition, when their vain hope has merely this uncertain foundation, that there is a bare possibility, that their old age may be accepted of God, tho they spend their youth in sinning against him! What an unparallel'd presumption, for a man to neglect to make provision for his everlasting bliss at present, only because it is not absolutely impossible that he may do it in time to come! To refuse the present improvement of the time of grace God is now pleas'd to allow him, because the divine goodness can afford him the like advantage hereafter; tho it is very improbable that he will grant it to so presumptuous a criminal! Will any man fall without fear upon the point of his sword, because 'tis possible he may not receive a mortal wound by it? Is any man so mad as to

^x Heb. 3. 13.

poison himself with the most subtle venom, because he thinks there is some possibility of his obtaining an antidote? Or will any one in his wits carefully suffer his body to languish under a violent disease, without seeking for cure till his strength is almost quite exhausted, and he's ready to expire, thinking himself secure enough of recovery, because it is not utterly impossible, that a man may be restor'd to health when almost reduc'd to the last gasp by violent sickness? No—men are more careful of their bodies than to hazard them at this rate, how careless soever they are of their souls: they are prudent in the affairs of this life, but act after the most absurd and improvident manner about the great concerns of the world to come.

But whether we will act reasonably or not, what has been argued does abundantly demonstrate that it is both highly reasonable and advantageous for young persons to devote themselves to the service of their *creator in the days of their youth*; and that it is as dangerous as it is unreasonable to defer that important work to the days of old age, which are very uncertain, in that we know not whether we shall attain them or not; and, if we do, will prove so evil, if this great business of our lives be till then neglected, that we shall have occasion to complain that we *have no pleasure in them*.

I shall now endeavour to improve the things I have insisted on, by way of application:

And

And shall address myself,

1. To those who are advanc'd in years.
2. To those who have not yet exceeded the days of youth.

First, As for you who are advanc'd in years :

What has been said must needs offer you an occasion to inquire of your own consciences, whether you have dedicated yourselves to the service of God or not ; whether you have yet *remembred your creator* in the sense of our text, and are truly converted to him.

1. If you have not so remembred him, consider,

(1.) How extremely dangerous your case is. Can you be secure on the very brink of destruction ? surely it is more than *high time* for you to *awake^y*, lest you *sleep the sleep of death^z*. It will be a miracle of grace, if ever you be *recover'd out of the snare of the devil, who have been so long led captive by him at his will^a*. It has been your great folly to defer to *lay up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come^b*, till now ; but your folly in deferring it longer will still increase together with your guilt and danger : of which if you are sensible, seek immediately to escape ; *fly from the wrath to come^c*, which is hastening toward you ; for tho you may carelessly slumber, *your damnation slum-*

^y Rom. 13. 11.

^z Psal. 13. 3.

^a 2 Tim. 2. 26.

^b 1 Tim. 6. 19.

^c Mat. 3. 7.

bers not ^d, but will soon overtake you, if you do not speedily awake to righteousness ^e, and to the serious remembrance of your creator; for the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God ^f. If any of you have vainly flatter'd yourselves all your days with the presumptuous thoughts of having still time enough before you for the great work of your conversion; let me warn and exhort every such person, in the words of the apostle Peter to Simon Magus, *Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee: for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity* ^g. And to day, while it is called to day, remember your maker, lest any of you be farther harden'd thro' the deceitfulness of sin ^h.

(2.) If you are convinced of the folly and sinfulness of your neglect, do not absolutely conclude, 'tis now too late to obtain mercy, nor continue that neglect by despair, in which you have long persisted by presumption. As you cannot set limits to the justice of God, so neither can you measure his long-suffering and goodness: therefore you ought not now to say, *his mercies are quite gone for ever, and he will be favourable no more* ⁱ. Encourage yourselves to turn to God, and to rely on his mercy, at least with the same ar-

^d 2 Pet. 2. 3.

^e 1 Cor. 15. 34.

^f Psal. 9. 17.

^g Acts 8. 22, 23.

^h Heb. 3. 13.

ⁱ Psal. 77. 7, 8, 9.

gument the famish'd lepers us'd to engage one another to throw themselves on the compassion of the Syrian army: *Why sit we here, say they, until we die? If we say we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also.* Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live, and if they kill us, we shall but die^k. Reason with yourselves after the like manner. Why sit we still in a state of the greatest danger? If after the sense of our danger, we return to our former course of life, we must perish; if we remain in our present posture, and neglect to try the *father of mercies*, whether he will commiserate such inveterate sinners, we inevitably perish too. Let us cast ourselves at his feet; if he will save us, we shall live eternally; if he refuse, we can but perish. Say as David did, in another case, *it may be the Lord will look on our affliction*^l. Venture to prostrate yourselves at the throne of grace, as queen Esther did at the feet of the Persian monarch, with an *if I perish, I perish*^m; and who knows, but the scepter of divine mercy may yet tender you a pardon? It is possible that the prodigal may be accepted, tho he return late to his father's houseⁿ; and that God may place you among the rare instances of his free and sovereign grace. And if you are deeply sen-

^k 2 Kings 7. 3, 4.^l 2 Sam. 16. 12.^m Esther. 4. 16.ⁿ Luke 15. 20.

sible of your past iniquity, and earnestly groan for a change in your souls, for a *new* and pure *heart* and a *right spirit* °, it is to be hop'd, that God, whose compassions are infinite, has now at last open'd your eyes, that you might not *sleep the sleep of eternal death* p; has made you *hunger and thirst after righteousness* q, with a design to satisfy you; and has wounded your spirits by a *godly sorrow* r, with a purpose to heal them with *the oil of joy* s, with the *comforts of his free spirit* t. You have run a strange risque to delay a work of this nature, and of this consequence, till now; but if God has given you deep and serious repentance, he designs you favour, and your contrition gives hope of a pardon. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon* u. But,

2. If you are truly converted, it is your happiness and honour: *The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness* u.

But did you consecrate to your creator the flower of your youth? or have you only offer'd him your later years?

° Psal. 51. 10.

p Psal. 13. 3.

q Mat. 5. 6.

r 2 Cor. 7. 10.

s Isa. 61. 3.

t Psal. 51. 12.

u Isa. 55. 7.

u Prov. 16. 31.

It may be you began to *work in his vineyard* but *at the tenth or eleventh hour* ^v, or at least since your fun has been declining. If so, then

(1.) Admire and adore that grace of God, which kept back your feet from destruction, when you were ready to step into eternal misery; and indulgently pluck'd you out of the way of approaching ruin, as the blessed angels did Lot, to secure him from the impending shower of fire and brimstone, which threatned Sodom, when *he lingred* in that vicious and accursed city ^w. How can you chuse but reflect with astonishment on the danger you have escap'd, and bless that divine hand which kindly diverted you from that presumptuous course, that was ready to cast you on a rock, on which you have seen so many dash themselves in pieces? Praise him, I say, *who has sav'd you from so great, and so near a death* ^x; and *remembred* you in mercy, when you had *forgotten him days without number* ^y.

(2.) Let the sincerity of your thankfulness, and of your repentance too appear, by the improvement of that little portion of time which you have yet remaining. *Redeem your time*, now at least, *because the days are evil* ^z. Improve the evil days of old age with the utmost diligence, since the better days of

^v Mat. 20. 5, 6.

^w Gen. 19. 16, 17.

^x 2 Cor. 1. 10.

^y Jer. 2. 32.

^z Eph. 5. 16.

youth are past recalling. Make it evident to all, that your late repentance is true, by such an industrious management of your remaining days, as may convince the world that it is no small grief of heart to you, that your repentance was so late. Recover your lost time as much as possible by your present diligence, and let none of your precious moments for the future be heedlessly expended, but husband them well in *working out your salvation with fear and trembling*^a. Let your frequent hours, and acts of devotion, make up the long want yourselves have had of those sacred privileges that attend the exercises of holy worship; and thereby make restitution, as much as in you lies, to your creator, for the sacrilege you have often committed, in robbing him of those pious offerings, those continual sacrifices with which you ought daily to have furnished his altar. Let your example be as beneficial to mankind as it has been injurious: and as you have tempted others to sin, strive now to incite them to piety. If you bear the character of parents or masters, labour to convince those young persons, who are under the influence of your counsel, or the awe of your authority, of the great advantages of an early conversion: and let them know you now seriously lament the past follies of your youth; that as your ill counsels, and vicious patterns have long made you *partakers of other mens sins*^b, so

^a Phil. 2. 12.| ^b 1 Tim. 5. 22.

your religious exhortations and good examples may obtain on your acquaintance, and those that are under your conduct, so as to intitle you, in some sort, to other mens virtues. In a word, remember that you are under a special obligation, *that*, as the apostle speaks, *you should no longer live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of your life may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when ye walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries* ^c.

If your case be otherwise, and you began early to give yourselves up to the service of your creator :

(I.) Bless and magnify that God who was *the guide of your youth* ^d, who wrought that happy change on your souls, who were *children of wrath by nature as well as others* ^e. What copious subjects of praise will your experience furnish you withal, when you reflect on the long series of divine favours, that have attended you thro' the various parts and changes of life ! And what a pleasant review may you take of a well-spent life, directed to the glory of God, and conducted by his grace ! What matter of thanksgiving may you find in the many assurances of his love, and in the evidence of the work of his grace upon your souls ; and in the frequent and

^c 1 Pet. 4. 2, 3.

^d Jer. 3. 4.

^e Eph. 2. 3.

familiar prospect he has given your faith of that invisible and ineffable glory after which you have been so long aspiring, and which you are now so near enjoying! You have reason to bless your creator, as well for preventing your commission of the many sins you have escaped, as for forgiving those you have committed; for preserving your innocence on many occasions, as well as for pardoning your guilt on others; for making you happy so soon by an early conversion, and for giving you the hope of a distinguishing crown of glory; for honouring the best of your time by accepting it in his service; and for sweetning the worst of it, the evil days of old age, with all the comforts which the reflection on a life of grace, and with all the joys which the prospect of a life of glory can inspire. Surely *the high praises of God should be in your mouths*^f; for, to use the words of Christ on that solemn occasion, when his disciples cry'd Hosanna to him, and the children join'd their tender voices in that grateful acclamation, *I tell you if you should hold your peace, the stones would immediately cry out*^g.

(2.) You ought to manifest the truth of your early conversion by the extent of your knowledge in divine things, and by the warmth of your affection to them. *I write unto you, fathers*, says the apostle John, *because you have known him that is from the be-*

^f Psal. 149, 6.

^g Luke 19. 40. Mat. 21. 15.
ginning.

ginning^h. Both God and men expect that your growth both in knowledge and in grace, should bear some proportion to the time you have spent in the school of Christ; that you should be the tallest cedars in Lebanon, that have been so long planted there; and the most fruitful vines, that have been so often *watered with the river of God*ⁱ. Seeing you are not babes, either in regard of the time you have lived in the world, or of that you have spent in the church of God, but persons of full age, *who by reason of use ought to have your senses exercised to discern both good and evil*^k; let it not be said of you, that *when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God*^l, and that you are again become such as *have need of milk, and not of strong meat*: or that you are of the number of those who are *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*^m. You ought to be greatly mortified to this world, who have a long time professed to be convinced of its vanity, and to be *dying daily to it*ⁿ; and who find old age ready to transport you to the other. And since you have long pretended to have had your *conversation*^o and business in heaven, certainly you ought to have gain'd much by that

^h 1 John 2. 13, 14.

ⁱ Psal. 65. 9.

^k Heb. 5. 13, 14.

^l Ver. 12.

^m 2 Tim. 3. 7.

ⁿ 1 Cor. 15. 31.

^o πολιτεύμα, Phil. 3. 20.

happy commerce ; and to have laid up much treasure in the regions of glory, as well as to have been *rich in good works* ^p here below : and you should be dextrous in putting on and handling the *christian armour* ^q, who have often had occasion to try it ; and so skilful in defeating the projects of your adversary the devil, since you are suppos'd *not* to be *ignorant of his devices* ^r, as after the sharpest conflicts to become *more than conquerors thro' him that hath loved you* ^t.

These things may reasonably be supposed and expected from you. But do you fill up these characters, that so well agree with your long standing in the church of God ? Are you fathers in knowledge and piety as well as in years ? and is the size of your spiritual stature proportionate to the time of your natural life, or at least of your spiritual life, which commenced not long after the other ? Are you become very humble by a long acquaintance with your own hearts, and with that God who is *the searcher* ^s of them ? Is your faith become strong by a long exercise ? your hope firm by your long and familiar acquaintance with the promises of God, and with him *in whom all those promises are yea, and amen* ^t, true and faithful ? Have your various afflictions taught you to *possess your souls in patience* ^u ? and have the many fa-

^p 1 Tim. 6. 18.

^q Eph. 6. 11 — 18.

^r 2 Cor. 2. 11.

^s Rom. 8. 37.

^s Jer. 17. 10.

^t 2 Cor. 1. 20.

^u Luke 21. 19.

vours you have received of God so tun'd your hearts to his praise, that you can *in every thing give thanks* ^v? Does your spiritual vigour advance, as your natural strength declines? and is your *inward man renewed day by day, as your outward man perishes* ^w? Have you made such a proficiencie as this in religion? or is it otherwise? Examine yourselves strictly and seriously about it. May not your creator send you back to learn of those that are much younger, and who have not had so great advantages of improvement as you? Nay, may he not send you back to be instructed by yourselves, I mean, by the former part of your lives? and shame your late backslidings, by putting you in mind of your early zeal? May he not justly reprove you in reminding you of your former kindneses to him, as well as of his to you, as he did the Jews of old; and say, *I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown: Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase* ^x? May he not charge you as he did the Ephesians, with having *left your first love*, and with having fallen short of *your first works* ^y?

Surely it becomes you now strenuously to persist in *fighting the good fight of faith* ^z,

^v 1 Theff. 5. 18.

^w 2 Cor. 4. 16.

^x Jer. 2. 2, 3.

^y Rev. 2. 4, 5.

^z 1 Tim. 6. 12.

I

when

124 *The reasonableness and advantages*

when you are near the consummation of all your victories in an eternal triumph: to *press forward* vigorously in your spiritual race now at last, when you have almost attained *the mark*^a; and to aspire earnestly after that diadem of glory, with which you are so suddenly to be crown'd: to converse constantly in heaven, now you are just forsaking the earth; to live intirely by faith, since you are going to die in it^b; to *die in the Lord*^c, and that in order to *live with him*^d in a state that will turn your faith into vision, and your hope into enjoyment.

If thus while age bends your bodies towards the earth, grace raises your souls toward heaven; if your faith grows sagacious, while your eyes grow dim; and your hope grows firm, while your hands and knees are feeble; if the warmth of your love to God increases as your natural heat abates, and the fallies of your affections after him grow strong and lively, as the motions of your animal spirits grow weak and languid; then as your *last works* will be *more than your first*^e, so you will honour God as well in the worst part of your time^f, as you have done in the best of it. And as by *bringing forth much fruit even in old age*^g, you will glorify your heavenly

^a Phil. 3. 13, 14.

^b Heb. 11. 13.

^c Rev. 14. 13.

^d 1 Cor. 13. 12.

^e Rev. 2. 5.

^f — *Primis sic major gratia promissis;*

Hyberna pretium sic meruerit rosa.

^g Psal. 92. 14.

father;

father^h; so your hoary hairs will be honourable in this world, and an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*ⁱ will be your portion in the world to come.

Secondly, Let me now address myself to you that are young; and intreat you also to put this important question to your own hearts, Whether you have yet remembered your creator, so as to dedicate yourselves to his service, or not?

If you have devoted to him the first-fruits of your time,

(1.) It behoves you with profound humility and reverence to ascribe to your maker the glory of his grace, who made you *willing in the day of his power to serve him in the beauties of holiness*, even from the womb of the morning of your time^k, and to offer him the early dew of your youth: for *no flesh may glory in his presence*^l; seeing *all flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the fading flower of the field*^m, in a moral as well as a natural sense. If you have been distinguished from others by early impressions of piety, know that it is grace that has made the differenceⁿ; and glorify that God, who *perfects his praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings*^o; and reveals that to children, which he sometimes *bides from the wise and prudent*^p. Bless him

^h John 15. 8.

ⁱ 2 Cor. 4. 17.

^k Psal. 110. 3.

^l 1 Cor. 1. 20.

^m Isa. 40. 6: 1 Pet. 1. 24.

ⁿ 1 Cor. 4. 7.

^o Psal. 8. 2. Mat. 21. 16.

^p Luke 10. 21.

that

that has redeemed you from the earth, and from among men^q, at a time when the pleasures of sin, and the society of sinners appear in the most alluring form: Praise that God, who by the early seeds of holiness which he has sown in your hearts, is preparing you to reap a plentiful harvest of graces and blessings here, and a glorious reward hereafter.

(2.) Consider the mighty obligations that are upon you to engage you in a holy conversation. As you have received more than many others, more is required of you: and what we have said may be justly expected to be found in those old disciples that have followed Christ from their youth, sufficiently signifies the mark at which you are to aim, and the exalted degrees of grace to which you are to aspire. In order to which you ought to be cautious of the least degree of apostacy. Have a care, lest after having seem'd to begin in the spirit, you should miserably end in the flesh^r. Therefore flee youthful lusts^t; and endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ^s. Inure yourselves to self-denial, and set your affections on things above^u. Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation^v, or at least that your faith may not fail you^w, when you are tempted: and to that end read and meditate on the word of God, day and night^w,

^q Rev. 14. 3, 4.

^r Gal. 3. 3.

^t 2 Tim. 2. 22.

^s Ver. 3.

^t Col. 3. 1, 2.

^u Mat. 26. 41.

^v Luke 22. 32.

^w Psal. 1. 2.

that

that you may know how to manage *the sword of the spirit* ^x, so as to wound the head of your potent and subtle adversary. I write unto you young men, saith the apostle John, *because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one* ^y. Govern yourselves in every thing by the exact rule of the holy scripture; for *wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way, but by taking heed to it according to that divine word* ^z? Take heed lest the holy religion you profess be dishonoured by your practice. Let your manner of life be so circumspect and irreproachable, that it may stop the mouths of blasphemers; stop them, did I say? nay, that it may open them in favour of religion, that *when they see your good works, they may be induced to glorify your heavenly father* ^a, and to worship him, and to confess that *God is in you of a truth* ^b. Let a becoming modesty and gravity adorn your conversation: *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers* ^c. Provoke others to a holy emulation by the lustre of your examples, and chuse the excellent patterns of the most devout and experienced christians for your own imitation. Let your

^x Eph. 6. 17.

^y 1 John 2. 13, 14.

^z Psal. 119. 9.

^a Mat. 5. 16.

^b 1 Cor. 14. 25.

^c Col. 4. 6. Eph. 4. 29.

zeal be constantly directed by knowledge, and your knowledge always ballasted by humility. In a word, *set the Lord always before your faces*^d, that you may not sin against him. Remember your creator, what he is, and what homage and service you owe him. Remember how reasonable that service is^e; and how intirely your true interest and happiness is involv'd in it; and industriously improve all the advantages of your time to the glory of him, who is *the God of your life*^f; that if you live to be aged, you may be able to make happy reflections on your youth, and on the endearing favours of him that has been with you from your youth to old age, and *has carried you*, as the prophet speaks, *even to hoary hairs*^g: that *coming to the grave in a full age*, you may be *like shocks of corn that come in in their season*^h, fully ripened and prepared for heaven; or if you are called to lie down in the grave before, that you may be ripe for glory, and *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light* betimesⁱ; that your names may be great on earth, and your rewards may be great in heaven.

As for you who are still young, but have not yet made an offering of your youth to your creator :

(1.) Let me ask you, what hinders you from presenting so reasonable a service to

^d Psal. 16. 8.

^e Rom. 12. 1.

^f Psal. 42. 8.

^g Isa. 46. 4.

^h Job 5. 26.

ⁱ Col. 1. 12.

him? You have seen that the reason of this duty, which our text urges, is founded in your very being, in the relation you bear to the Almighty as his creatures: and since your greatest interest too is embarked in it, why should so just, and so useful an exhortation be rejected? Will you yet continue to rob your maker of the homage and service you owe him? and deprive yourselves of the honour and privilege of serving him? Will you yet be *unmindful of the rock that begat you*, and still *forget the God that form'd you*^k? Is the great God ready to accept your service, and will you still refuse to offer it? What illusions of sense are those that charm you? what *bonds of iniquity*^l are those that captivate your souls, and hold you, both against the forcible arguments, and the indulgent invitations of the divine word?

As we have taken a view of the arguments that oblige you to your duty; let us also, to remove the chief stumbling-blocks that obstruct your way, inquire a little into the pretended reasons that detain you in your sin.

Will you say, “ It is a rigorous demand to
 “ require us to forsake the world almost as
 “ soon as we come into it; and to renounce
 “ the charming sweets wherewith it flatters
 “ our senses, even before we have so much as
 “ tasted many of the pleasures to which it
 “ invites us: and this in that part of our
 “ life, that gives us the highest relish of these

^k Deut. 32. 18.

^l Acts 8. 23.

“ delights; when our senses are most lively
 “ and active, and when the world shews it-
 “ self most obliging and kind, and presents
 “ us on every side with thousands of pleasant
 “ objects ?”

But tell me, are the promises of the world like the promises of God ? Are those pleasures, the highest relish of which vanishes, by your own confession, together with your youth, and so may be soon out-liv'd by yourselves, to be compared with the eternal joys of heaven ? Are the smiles of the world, and the pleasures of sense, to be preferred to the smiles of God and the joy of a good conscience here, and to the refin'd and spiritual delights of the other world ? Is a life of sin, which will prove *bitterness in the latter end of it*^m, which is enjoy'd but a few moments, but followed with the gnawings of *a worm that never dies*ⁿ, to be chosen before a life of holiness, which is accompanied with inward peace in the soul, and followed with immortal glory and pleasure ? Is it worth the while to purchase a few hours delight in gratifying your sordid and brutish appetites, with the loss of your precious souls ? Will you rather hazard an eternal privation of the joys of heaven, and expose yourselves to the danger of everlasting perdition, than curb the extravagant inclinations of your vain and sensual hearts ? Will you still flatter the levity and unsteadiness of your youthful minds, in pur-

^m 2 Sam. 2. 26.

ⁿ Mark 9. 44.

suings all the vain fancies your extravagant imaginations can represent? Will you continue to follow those gay bubbles, which will yield you scarce any thing but disappointment, vexation and guilt; when you are invited to fix your minds and your hearts on your creator, to make him the object of your thoughts and of your desires, who gives his votaries the hope of immortal glory, which produces in their souls a great degree of happiness at present, and who will hereafter fill them with joys infinitely beyond the most raised expectation?

Will you farther urge, "But we have no mind to be singular, to distinguish ourselves from the generality of mankind, by an affectation of a strict course of life; and that at an age when every one allows the senses an indulgence? There is a proper season for every thing. Youth is the time for pleasure, and old age for repentance; for the latter part of our lives seems destined to trouble and sorrow: and then it is fit to live a spiritual life, when age has deadened the senses, and so prepar'd us to live after that abstracted manner."

And is it not as easy as it is reasonable to reply, That it is a foolish scrupulosity to be so careful to avoid singularity, as to run from it into a common destruction: to refuse to be holy and happy, and to chuse sin and misery, because *the way to life is narrow* and unfrequented, and the way to *damnation*

broad° and full of company? Is not this a vain affectation of conformity to the world, for you to *follow a multitude to do evil*^p, *tho their ways lead to hell, and go down to the chambers of death*^q; to abandon yourselves to the torrent of evil examples, *tho they drown you in perdition*^r; to sacrifice your own eternal interest in complaisance to the custom and humour of other men, and to *walk in the counsel of the ungodly*^t, *tho you damn yourselves for company*?

And because some rather seem to pity, or even indulge, than blame many of the follies of youth, partly from the consideration of their unexperience and giddiness of mind, and of their great propensity to carnal pleasures; partly because custom has rendred the vices of youth familiar to the world, and partly because many of those that are advanced in years, instead of reflecting on their youthful vanities with sorrow, are yet so insensible, as to look back upon them as excusable follies, or as sins of small consequence; must therefore an opinion that has so rotten a foundation, obtain credit in the world, as if it were a maxim of undoubted truth? Does the holy scripture, or reason allow youth any such dispensation for sin? Is so great an evil to be at any time indulg'd? Is any scope in vice allowable to the time of youth any more

° Mat. 7. 13, 14.

^p Exod. 23. 2.

^q Prov. 7. 27.

^r 1 Tim. 6. 9.

^t Psal. 1. 1. and ver. 6.

than

than to the time of old age ? Is not sin always evil, and always to be avoided ? Can you think it deserves the very best of your time, and that your creator is unworthy of such an offering ?

You have heard it sufficiently proved that youth is the most proper time of all, and old age the most unfit for the great business of conversion to God ; that it is the greatest proof of the reality of our self-denial, when we restrain the vicious inclinations of our youth, that are so eager after sensual pleasures : and that an aged sinner is so far from being likely to be a true penitent, that the long time he has been hardening himself in his wickedness, renders the change of his heart impossible, without a more than ordinary effort of grace, which God is seldom pleas'd to grant to them that are grown old in vice.

Will you say after this, “ God whose mercies are infinite, is gracious enough to receive us into his vineyard at the last hour of the day, and to give us a place in paradise, if, like the thief on the cross, we begin to repent, when we are ceasing to live ; and we may hope to die happily, tho we have lived viciously ? ”

After having so largely detected the vanity of such hopes as these, as we have already done, much more need not be added. Is not this to build an imaginary happiness on a thousand uncertainties ? And what a daring

presumption is it, to *continue in sin, that grace may abound*^s? Because the gracious God has given one example in his word, of a sinner converted at the last hour of his life, is it reasonable for every sinner to conclude, that he may expect the same extraordinary favour, and so may safely defer his repentance till he is ready to expire? No; this great instance of mercy in the crucified malefactor, was given to prevent a true, tho late penitent, from despairing; not to encourage any bold sinner to *turn the grace of God into lasciviousness*^t by his presumption. And how many fatal instances might be given of the vanity of such hopes as these! How few of those daring sinners have arrived at the time, which they pretended to devote to religious purposes! How very few of those who have reached old age, have become sensible of their guilt and danger after a long life spent in the service of sin! Have they not generally supinely dozed away their last moments, as they vainly spent their first, without awaking, till they have found themselves in *everlasting burnings*^v? Or if they have received some convictions of their guilt, these have not always produced on them the characters of *a repentance to salvation*^u, but have sometimes filled their miserable souls with despair and horror; and their former delusive hopes of obtaining pardon at the last

^s Rom. 6. 1.

^t Jude 4.

^v Isa. 33. 14.

^u 2 Cor. 7. 10.

hour, have only issued in *a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour them* ^w. Learn therefore, before it be too late, *so to number your days as to apply your hearts to wisdom* ^x.

Will you, after all that has been said, still persuade yourselves, that it is yet time enough for you to remember your creator ; and that you may safely enough defer the securing of your salvation yet some time longer, if not quite to the evil days of old age ; that it is best for you first to establish yourselves in the world as firmly as you can, and to make provision for your temporal interest ; and afterwards at your leisure to think on the affairs of another life ?

These things have been also sufficiently answered before ; yet let me farther add, That as your time is very uncertain on the one hand, so your resolutions are yet more fickle on the other : for how common a thing is it for men to assume a purpose of repentance, and presently to relinquish it again ! How often do they violate their promises to God and to themselves, while they are perpetually fixing a new future season of amendment ! *So deceitful is the heart of man, and so desperately wicked, who can know it* ^y ?

And how preposterous is the course you take, to endeavour to provide for your bodies before your souls, and to secure your

^w Heb. 10. 27.

^x Psal. 92. 12.

^y Jer. 17. 9.

temporal before your eternal interest : hearkning rather to the deluding suggestions of *the father of lyes*^z, who tempts you with the gilded vanities of this perishing world, than to the counsel of him who is *wisdom itself*^z, who advises you to *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*; and assures you, that then *the things* of this world, *i. e.* so far as may conduce to your welfare, *shall be superadded*^b ?

Since therefore your creator requires your present time, 'tis your prudence, your interest, and your duty, without *conferring with flesh and blood*, immediately to obey him^c; to seek him while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near^d, and while he calls upon you; lest if you persist to slight and forget your maker, and his counsel any longer, he should so remember your iniquity and visit your sins^e, as to pronounce on you this dreadful sentence : *Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me*

^z John 8. 44.

^a 1 Cor. 1. 24.

^b Mat. 6. 31, 32, 33.

^c Gal. 1. 16.

^d Isa. 55. 6. Psal. 32. 6. Psal. 145. 18.

^e Hos. 8. 13, 14.

early, but they shall not find me ; for that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord : they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof : therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be fill'd with their own devices : for the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them^f. How will you bear such a dismal sentence as this ? O with what terror will it strike your guilty souls, especially when you are under the apprehension of approaching death, or bowed down under the burden of age ! What will you do in those days of evil, when the iniquity of your heels shall compass you about^g ? when your bones will be full of the sin of your youth, which shall lie down with you in the dust^h ? when the terrors of God shall strike your consciences, and all your past life shall accuse and condemn you ? when the heavens shall reveal your iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against youⁱ ? when your flesh upon you shall have pain, and your souls within you shall mourn^k ? Tho wickedness be now sweet in your mouths, and you therefore hide it under your tongues ; tho you spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within your mouths ; yet its luscious taste shall be turn'd into bitterness in your bowels, and into the gall of asps within you^l. Is it not better to repent early

^f Prov. 1. 24—32.

^g Psal. 45. 5.

^h Job 20. 11.

ⁱ Job 20. 27.

^k Job 14. 22.

^l Job 20. 12, 13, 14.

than

than to be reduced to mourn in despair, when it is too late? when the Almighty shuts out your prayers, and when *a fire is kindled in his anger, that will burn to the lowest hell^m; when he that made you will not have mercy on you, and he that form'd you will shew you no favourⁿ?* If once that dreadful day overtakes you, each of you will then lament his folly with the saddest accents of sorrow and anguish, and turn upon himself with indignation and fury, saying, *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me^o!* and bewail himself, as our blessed Lord did Jerusalem, when he wept over that unhappy city, crying, *O that I had known, even I, in that my day, the things that belonged unto my peace, but now they are hid from my eyes^p.*

Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver^q.

If you begin now to entertain serious thoughts of religion, to stir you up farther to this great, tho miserably neglected duty, of remembering your creator in the days of your youth, let me intreat you to consider two or three things.

1. That God has been often pleased to dignify them with special marks of honour

^m Deut. 32. 22.

ⁿ Isa. 27. 11.

^o Prov. 5. 12, 13.

^p Luke 19. 42.

^q Psal. 50. 22.

in his church, who have honour'd him by the early dedication of their youth to his service; and has render'd their services as eminent in the world, as their piety has been early and exemplary.

As the forward piety of Joseph kept him uncorrupt in his tender years amidst the evil examples of his envious *brethren*^r; so he was blessed with the largest share in the affection of his aged father. And tho his zeal for their reformation rendred him the object of their hatred, as well as of his father's love; yet the divine providence wonderfully prosper'd him, and gave him favour in that strange country, whither their unnatural malice had exil'd him^f. And as he there preserved his chastity when it was try'd^s after so extraordinary a manner, that it was become impossible for him to keep himself innocent without incurring the odium of being reputed guilty, as well as enduring other severe punishments; so the purity of his untainted soul, who rather chose to be accounted vile than to be so, was afterwards strangely clear'd up by the wise and gracious providence of the Almighty; and his injur'd name celebrated with the highest honours of the court of Egypt^t: the just and holy God whom he serv'd, having endow'd him with a prophetick gift of interpreting dreams; and by that divine skill open'd a way for his

^r Gen. 37. 2, 3, 4.^f Gen. 39. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.^s Ver. 7—20.^t Gen. 41.

advancement from prison to ride in the second chariot of the kingdom. So that he became a prince and a father to that nation whither he was brought a stranger and a slave; and proved the happy instrument not only of preserving multitudes of people from the rage of a tedious famine of seven years continuance, but also of nourishing his father's family in that time of common calamity^t. And by this means he had the honour of the most obsequious addresses of those very brethren of his who had been his persecutors, and at last had the God-like pleasure of melting them into a deep conviction of the unreasonableness of their enmity against him, by the most endearing caresses^u, and sweetest expressions of brotherly love and tenderness, and the satisfaction of that truly generous and innocent kind of revenge, of *overcoming evil with good*^v. Thus God was pleased to reward the eminent piety of his youth, by making him the darling of his providence; and to lay the foundation of his glory in those sufferings which were the proof of his virtue.

Samuel, a young votary to the service of God in his tabernacle, as he grew up, became the favourite both of God and men^w: so eminently was he anointed with the spirit of prophecy, and that in a time when *the word of the Lord was very pre-*

^t Gen. 43. and chap. 44.

^u Chap. 45.

^v Rom. 12. 21.

^w 1 Sam. 2. 26.

cious^x, that all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that he was established a prophet of the Lord^y.

That piety which season'd the tender years of David, rendred him, according to his name, so *beloved*^z both of God and men, that God was pleased to fill him with a prophetick spirit; and both God and men thought good to chuse him to wear a regal diadem. The supreme ruler and arbiter of the world was pleased to reward his forward zeal for him, by raising him from the fold to the throne, and by making him exchange his shepherd's crook for a royal scepter: so that from a feeder of sheep he became both the prophet and king of a mighty nation; *the sweetest psalmist*, and the most valiant prince of Israel^a.

Religious Josiah, who began to reform himself in the sixteenth year of his age, and to reform the people under his government before he had exceeded twenty^b, was honoured of God with the happy accomplishment of a glorious reformation in the kingdom of Judah, when but twenty six years old^c; and had the earliness of his piety signaliz'd by the delay of those judgments with which Jerusalem was threaten'd, till the expiration of his religious reign^d. God was

^x 1 Sam. 3. 1.

^y 1 Sam. 3. 19, 20.

^z דלֵּיטִּיךְ אֶלֶּלֵּיךְ *dilectus*. 1 Sam. 17. 33, 42, 56.

^a 2 Sam. 23. 1.

^b 2 Chron. 34. 3.

^c Ver. 8.

^d Ver. 23—28.

pleased

pleased to honour his early zeal with a peculiar protection given for a time to the nation under his conduct, for his sake ; and would not fill his reign, that was so famous for his piety, with those scenes of horror and misery, which darkened the times of his unhappy successors. The divine compassion would not suffer him to see that city stain'd with the blood of its inhabitants, which he had been so industrious to purge from superstition, and from the worship of idols. And as his life was honourable to himself, and of the greatest advantage to his subjects ; so his death was attended with their solemn and universal mourning ^e, an honour which was refused to his profane successor : his funeral was celebrated with the lamentations of a great prophet ; and his memory preserved fresh and eternally fragrant in the sacred annals of the kings of Judah.

As John the baptist first devoted his youth to the pious meditations of a retir'd life, and then to the publick service of God in his generation ^f ; so he was invested with the honourable title of messenger to the Messiah, to prepare the way before him ; who says, he was not only *a prophet*, but *much more than a prophet* ; and that *among those that had been born of women, there was no greater prophet than he* ^g.

^e 2 Chron. 35. 24, &c.

^f Luke 1. 80. and 3. 2, 3, 4.

^g Luke 7. 26, 27, 28.

The early piety of Timothy, who was well acquainted with the holy scriptures from his childhood ^h, was honoured with the most endearing love of the great apostle of the Gentiles, and with an eminent station in the church of God, wherein his prudent and religious deportment secured his youth from contempt ⁱ: and made the apostle give him a singular character to the Philippians, assuring them that he had *no man like-minded, who would naturally care for their state* ^k.

The *beloved disciple* ^l is reported to have been very young, when profelyted to the doctrine of Christ; and perhaps this was not the least occasion of his being made the bosom-friend of his divine master.

Nay, most of those who were dignified with the sacred office of apostleship, seem to have been converted in the flower of their time, by several circumstances of their history in the gospel, and by the many years some of them spent in travels, and other hard services and sufferings, after the ascension of our Saviour.

On the contrary, we find not like instances of persons call'd to such eminent services for God, and receiving such distinguishing marks of honour from him in old age, after a flagitious life, almost quite wasted in the sordid drudgery of sin.

^h 2 Tim. 3. 15.

ⁱ 1 Tim. 4. 12.

^k Phil. 2. 20.

^l John 13. 23.

What

What a generous emulation then should these illustrious examples, we have mentioned, kindle in the breasts of you who are young! With what a holy ambition should they inspire you, to become the early candidates of religion! Who knows in what eminent services it may please your maker to employ you? Who knows what signal favours and tokens of his divine love he may confer on you, if you consecrate to him the first of your strength, and the best of your time?

But the example, which of all others shines with the greatest glory, and communicates the sweetest influence, which is most capable both of raising your wonder, and of exciting your imitation, is that of our blessed redeemer, who came into the world to teach us by his life, as well as to save us by his death: he was pleased to honour the youthful state of life by passing thro' it, *in the days of his flesh*^m, while he dwelt with men, and did not defer his father's work to old age, a stage of life on which he never vouchsafed to enter: in his very childhood *he waxed strong in spirit, was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him*ⁿ. His soul advanced in divine knowledge, as his body did in stature, and so he *grew in favour with God and man*^o. At twelve years of age he was found reasoning with the

^m Heb. 5. 7.ⁿ Luke 2. 40.|^o Ver. 52.

Jewish doctors in the temple ^p, with that sense and understanding that amazed all the auditors, and with that zeal that became him, who made it his delight to be *about his father's business* ^q. All the time he lived among men may be properly enough called the time of youth; for there's reason to conclude from his history in the gospel, that he accomplished the whole of his work before he was advanced much beyond thirty years. And what a glorious example does his short life present us? a life without spot or blemish, without the least sign of any inclination to sin, without the least shew of injustice or want of charity towards men, or the least appearance of disobedience or ind devotion towards God: nay, a life spent in the greatest acts of charity to mankind, and in the highest elevations of piety to his father. A life that consumed itself in the *zeal of his house* ^r; that expired in a sacrifice to the glory of God, and for the salvation of the souls of men.

So that you have not only the precept, but the prescription too of your creator to engage you in your duty. He by whom you were made, by whom you are preserv'd, by whom alone you can be restor'd from a state of sin, and by whom you must be finally judg'd, was pleased to assume human nature, to be made man *in all things* ^s, sin only excepted,

^p Ver. 42, 46, 47.

^q Ver. 49.

Vol. I.

^r John 2. 17.

^s Heb. 2. 17.

L

on purpose to exemplify the duty in our text by his life, as well as to conquer sin and hell by his death. And since he calls you to *learn of him*^s, to bear the yoke to which he meekly condescended to bow his own sacred neck in his tender years, surely *it is good* for you to stoop to that *yoke in your youth* too^t. Ought you not to apply yourselves as well to his example for the direction of your lives, as to his sufferings for the remission of your sins? And is it not both for your honour and interest to be conformable to that blessed life, that was first taken up to instruct you, and then laid down to redeem you?

2. Consider how small that oblation is, which is required of your hands, when your whole life is claim'd as the right of your creator; seeing it is but a part of it, that can be directly and immediately offered to him. The secular affairs in which the necessities of your bodies engage you, and sleep, together with the other reparations of nature that are requisite to make those frail tabernacles tenantable, divide between them so great a share of the time of life, that it is but a little portion of it that can be allotted to pious exercises, how soon soever you apply yourselves to the practice of them: and will you grudge your maker this small share of your time, for the whole of which you intirely depend on him? Can you think much to allow a part of every day to devotion, to

^s Mat. 11. 28, 29, 30.

| ^t Lam. 3. 27.

the immediate service of God, and for the welfare of your souls, when he allows you so large a part of your time to provide for the present ease and welfare of your bodies, in procuring them the conveniences of life? Is it not more reasonable to grudge that these houses of clay should have so much of your care and time, and that your souls, nay, and your creator, should have so little of either? And ought you not rather to study how to improve even that time which you spend in supporting and accommodating this animal life, so as to render it subservient to the great ends of honouring your maker, and of saving your souls, than to contrive excuses for intirely squandering away the best part of that little time in vanity and sin, which you ought to devote to the holy exercises of piety and religion?

And, once again: Can you think you shall bring an acceptable sacrifice, if after the consumption of the prime of your days in vanity, you should come to offer only some of your last hours to your creator? Will the days, in which you will confess you have no pleasure yourselves, be a proper offering for him to take pleasure in? Is it fit to reserve only the blind and lame and sick for sacred services? May not such a return be reasonably expected to every such oblation, as God by the prophet Malachi makes to the profane Jews in another case;

Offer it now to thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts ^u. Would you not have reason to fear that such nauseous services would be cast back as *dung upon your faces* ^v? and that you would have an answer somewhat like that, which you may imagine a subject would receive, who after having wasted his youth and strength in bearing arms against his sovereign, should come on crutches in his old age to tender himself to be lifted under his banner? Such a kind of answer, I say, as such an inveterate rebel might expect; but as much more terrible, as it is a greater crime to sin against the great creator than to offend a creature, and as the resentments of the living God are more dreadful than the anger of a mortal man.

3. To conclude: Consider whether the largest portion of that little time, which you can possibly spend in the service of God here, makes any figure, when compared with an eternity to be employed in the pleasant contemplation and enjoyment of him hereafter. Can you think much to dedicate the few moments God is pleased to lend you in this world to him, who will reward the service of those moments with everlasting bliss in the next, among those blessed ones, whose happiness as well as business it is to be perpetually devoted to the service of their maker; who enjoy immortal youth, and feel

^u Mal. 1. 8.

[^v Mal. 2. 3.

an unconceivable pleasure in employing it wholly in the contemplation of his perfections, in the celebration of his praises, in the intire performance of his will, and in the perfect enjoyment of his favour?

Can it be thought that any of those blessed spirits that are possessed of this glory, can think much that they spent a little time here below to obtain it? May it not rather be supposed that they all unanimously wish, if such a wish be consistent with that perfect state of bliss, that they had improved every minute of that little time which their creator allotted them in this world, to his glory? It is not to be doubted, that the holy angels and saints in heaven do incessantly worship and serve their maker with the greatest alacrity imaginable, because they constantly behold his face, and are always enamoured of his glory; they are under a continual impression of the reasonableness and goodness of his will, and know perfectly well that their own excellency and happiness consists in their exact conformity to it; and accordingly they find unexpressible delights in doing his pleasure. And if they count not an eternity too much for the service of their creator, can you think the short time of your sojourning here below, too large an offering for him?

Seeing then the law of your creation, and the dictates of reason; the importunity of the divine word, and the warnings of the

150 *The reasonableness and advantages, &c,*

holy Spirit; the command of your maker, and the example of your redeemer; the experience of the saints on earth, and the unanimous sense of the saints and angels too in heaven; together with your own highest interest both in time and eternity, all conspire to oblige you to devote the first and best of your time to the great author of your being; how can you any longer refuse to give up your youth to be tied by these many sacred bonds, as a sacrifice to the horns of his altar ^x?

Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation^y. Therefore to day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ^z.

^x Pſal. 118. 27.

^y 2 Cor. 6. 2.

^z Pſal. 95. 7, 8. Heb. 3. 7, 8.



The

*The groans of a faint, under
the burden of a mortal body.*

A sermon preached at the funeral of
Mr. John Belcher, late minister of
the gospel. April 1, 1695.

S E R M O N IV.

2 COR. V. 4.

*For we that are in this tabernacle do groan,
being burdened: not for that we would
be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mor-
tality might be swallowed up of life.*

 HE wisest of men tells us, that
the end of a thing is better than
the beginning of it,^a and that the
day of one's death is better than the
day of one's birth^b. To whatever
other sense these sayings may be accommo-
dated, they are eminently true of a righteous

^a Eccl. 7. 8.

| ^b Eccl. 7. 1.

man. What a vast difference is there between the state in which he comes into the world, and that wherein he passes out of it! and how much better is his exit than his entrance on the stage of this transitory life! he is *born in sin*^c, but *dies in faith*^d: he comes into the world a *child of wrath*^e, goes out of it *an heir of bliss*^f. When he begins to live, he begins to go *astray from God*^g; when he comes to die, he makes the last and *largest step towards him*^h: when he draws his first breath, he is *without God in the world*ⁱ; when he breathes his last, it is to be *ever with the Lord*^k. He enters the world naked, defiled, and helpless^l, in a moral as well as in a natural sense; he passes out of it clothed with the righteousness of Christ, beautified with the graces of the holy Spirit, *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*^m: and all this in order to be invested with eternal glory.

It is true, there is usually some joy on earth *when a man is born into the world*ⁿ, notwithstanding all those deplorable circumstances that accompany his birth: but how much greater joy may we reasonably suppose there is in heaven, when a saint is removed from

^c Psal. 51. 5.

^d Heb. 11. 13.

^e Eph. 2. 3.

^f Rom. 8. 17.

^g Psal. 58. 3.

^h 2 Cor. 5. 8.

ⁱ Eph. 2. 12.

^k 1 Thess. 4. 17.

^l Ezek. 16. 4, 5.

^m Eph. 6. 10.

ⁿ John 16. 21.

this lower world, seeing so many glorious advantages attend his death !

And it is no wonder then if holy men do often look without any amazing fears, nay sometimes with earnest desires of their change, into the dark region of death, while with the piercing eye of faith they can discover the glorious mount of God beyond the shadows of that gloomy vale. It is no surprising thing, if, when, with our apostle, they compare their past and present with their future state, what they have been, and what they are, while here, with what they shall be hereafter, they mix their sighs and wishes with his, and with one common voice express their sense after the same manner ; *We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, &c.*

The apostle had in the former chapter declared with how much faithfulness and diligence both himself, and his companions in the ministration of the gospel, had laboured in that blessed work, tho they had many hardships to encounter in the discharge of their duty, which yet they were enabled to endure with great firmness of mind, by the hope they had of an happy resurrection with other saints, resembling that of their Lord and master : *Knowing, says he, that he who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you °.*

• Ver. 14.

That

That which farther tended to mitigate their sufferings, was the fervent love they bare to the church on whose account they suffered, as is plainly enough suggested in the following words, *for all things are for your sakes*^p: but principally the ardent zeal they had for the honour of the name of God, which they knew would be highly advanced in the world by the praises of those who observed with admiration, and with joy partook of the abounding grace that was communicated by their doctrine, and exemplified in their sufferings. Therefore he mentions it as their common desire and hope, that this might be the issue of their labours and sufferings, in the same verse, *That the abundant grace might thro' the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God*^q. *For which cause we faint not*^r.

After which he opposes their present tribulations, to both their present and future enjoyments; and compares the afflictions they endured with the supplies of grace they had received, and with the state of glory they expected. He shews how they weighed visible and sensible against invisible and spiritual things, and temporal things against eternal; the former of which proved very light, and the latter exceeding weighty, while the steady hand of faith held the ballance. Which prudent comparison he mentions as a main

^p Ver. 15.

^q Ibid.

^r Ver. 16.

support and occasion of comfort to them under the greatest of their trials : for when he had to the former reason of their comfort subjoin'd these words, *for which cause we faint not*, he immediately adds, *But tho our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory : while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*[†].

The beginning of the fifth chapter expresses the firmness of their belief and hope for this blessed state, and the eagerness of their desires after it, tho not to be obtained without the previous dissolution of their bodies.

The strength of their faith is expressed, *ver. 1. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The earnestness of their desires, in ver. 2. For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.*

And *ver. 3.* he adds, *If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked.* Which some interpret as a caution, intimating the necessity of their being clothed with the righteousness and grace of Christ[‡], as the condi-

[†] Ver. 16, 17, 18.

[‡] See Mat. 22. 11. and Rev. 16. 15.

tion of, and preparation to their being clothed with his glory: and that the apostle by this expression intimates the reason why he had in the foregoing verse spoken of the saints being *clothed upon*, namely, that he speaks there of glory as an upper garment, because none shall obtain it but they that are first found clothed with grace.

Others refer these words to the *clothing of glory*, spoken of before: and some interpret them as an ardent wish, which the words in the original will bear, *And O that we being clothed, may not be found naked*^t. As the words of Christ when he wept over Jerusalem, may be interpreted, *If thou hadst known, q. d. O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace*^u, &c.

In the words of our text, the apostle repeats and explains what he had said before concerning their state in this life, and that which they hop'd for in the life to come: *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan*, &c.

And tho these words are here eminently and directly applied to the ministers of the gospel, yet they very well may, and ought to be extended to all true christians in general, who, when in a serious and considerate frame of mind, and under the influence of the lively exercise of faith, have the same sentiments, and speak the same language.

^t Εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐνδυσσάμενοι.

^u Εἰ ᾔσθης, Luke 19. 42.

We have herein,

- I. The description of the body of a saint, while in this life ; it is called *a tabernacle*.
- II. The uneasy situation of the souls of believers while they dwell in these bodies, they are *burdened*. *We that are in this tabernacle—being burdened*.
- III. Their desire of changing their present state for a better, explained, (1.) Negatively, not by being *unclothed* ; *not for that we would be unclothed*. (2.) Positively, by being *clothed upon*, *that mortality might be swallowed up of life*.
- IV. Both their great sense of the weight of their burden, and their fervent longing after this better state, expressed by *groaning* ; *we—groan*.

I. The first thing we are to inquire into, is the description of the body of a christian, why it is called a tabernacle.

A tabernacle or tent, is a kind of dwelling suited to a state of pilgrimage or warfare ; and as this is the common use of tabernacles, so it is to be remembered that one was made by the direction of God, and devoted to his sacred service, when he led his antient people thro' the wilderness. And since the metaphor in our text may be explained as well by a common, as by the sacred tabernacle ; we may consider its reference to each of them, whereby

whereby the fitness of thus describing the body of a faint, to whom the scripture often gives the characters of a pilgrim, and of a soldier, will easily appear.

The body of a faint in this life may be compared to a tent ;

(1.) For its frailty and weakness. A tent is a kind of dwelling indeed, but a very slender one ; it is rather a slight garment than a strong building ; and is so far from being able to defend its inhabitant from the hostile assaults of a potent enemy, that it often fails of securing him from the less violent attacks of incommodious weather. And thus it is with our bodies, they can no more guard our souls from the various miseries of this life, than a tent can defend a man from a cannon-shot, or a scabbard preserve a sword from the force of lightning. Nay, the body is so far from being able to secure the soul from misery, that it is often itself the occasion of her pains and sorrows, as we shall shew hereafter.

And as a tent is but an ill defence to him that possesses it, so it is a very feeble thing in itself, and may be easily and suddenly pulled down ; and may in this respect well denote the weakly and changeable state of our bodies in this life, which are soon disorder'd by diseases, and soon overthrown by death. As cloth, which is the matter of a tent, is not proof against the attacks of a feeble moth, but becomes a prey to that little insect ; so some little and unheeded circumstance often
strangely

strangely distempers a human body, which, to use the words of Eliphaz, *is even crush'd before the moth* ^v, or, as Job says, *consumes as a rotten thing, as a garment that is moth-eaten* ^w. And what the prophet Isaiah speaks of some, is in this sense applicable to all men; *The moth eats them up like a garment, and the worm eats them like wool* ^x.

And indeed tabernacles are erected but for a little space of time; they are not built for ages to come, as superb palaces and well-fortified castles are, but fix'd for a present exigency, with the design of a speedy removal. Thus the mortal bodies wherein men dwell are of a very short continuance; they are garments soon worn out by time, if not torn asunder before old age by a violent death, or fretted in pieces by some lingering disease. *They are suddenly carried away, as the psalmist speaks, as with a flood; they are as sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up; in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth* ^y. *As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more* ^z. *Our strength is soon cut off, and we flee away* ^a. Or, as Job expresses it, *Our days are swifter than a post; they flee away: they pass away*

^v Job 4. 19.

^w Job 13. 28.

^x Isa. 51. 8.

^y Psal. 90. 5, 6.

^z Psal. 103. 15, 16.

^a Psal. 90. 10.

as the swift ships, as the eagle that hasteth to the prey^b; or in the phrase of Hezekiah, *our age soon departs, and is removed from us as a shepherd's tent*^c.

(2.) A tabernacle is a very mean and inconvenient habitation: 'tis usually very strait, and raised but a little height from the earth, to which it is fastned by cords and stakes, and may in this respect fitly represent our bodies, which may well be called *earthly houses*^d by our apostle; not only in regard of their matter, and of the place of their residence, but also in respect of the influence they have on our souls: because they incline us to earthly-mindedness, and make us narrow-spirited; because they so much confine us to things below, and hinder us from serving God with that freedom and largeness of heart, and soaring aloft to converse with heavenly things with that ease and readiness that becomes us.

The veil of our flesh hinders our souls from taking a distinct and clear view of things that are near and obvious, and renders things remote scarce discernible; as the covering of a tent obstructs the prospect of him that is inclosed in it. A believer has some discerning of many great and important truths, but his knowledge of them is obscure and indistinct; like the confus'd sight of the blind man in the gospel, who, when his eyes began to be opened, saw men, but could not distinguish

^b Job 19. 25, 26.

^c Isa. 38. 12.

^d Ver. 1.

them

them from trees but by their motion^e: he sees some things distant in futurity, but it is as *thro' a glass and darkly*; he really sees and knows, but it is very imperfectly, and *but in part*^f; tho he knows the only true God^g, yet he cannot see him as he is in this life^h, for no man can thus see God and liveⁱ.

'Tis true, indeed, notwithstanding the meanness of the accommodations of tents, yet necessity has often constrained the greatest princes to make use of them; but they are by no means to be compared to those magnificent mansions, where their choice leads them to reside: for who would set the sordid tents of the wild Arabs in competition with the sumptuous palaces of kings? No more is the present vile and despicable condition of the bodies of the saints, to be compared to that state of beauty and honour wherewith those of our first parents were originally adorned, much less to that state of immortal glory and perfection, with which themselves shall hereafter be attired: for whereas they are now *as the tents of Kedar*, squallid and deform'd, they shall then be bright and *comely as the curtains of Solomon*^k.

But farther, as the bodies of believers are like common tabernacles, for their frailty and meanness by nature, so they may be likened to the sacred tabernacle, which was framed

^e Mark 8. 24.

^f 1 Cor. 13. 12.

^g John 17. 3.

^h 1 John 3. 2.

ⁱ Exod. 33. 20.

^k Cant. 1. 5.

by the special appointment of God, in respect of the use and service they are devoted to, and of the honour they receive by grace. They are tabernacles as they are the tenements of their own spirits, and sacred ones as they are the habitations of the spirit of God; for their bodies are consecrated to his service as well as their souls: the *members* of their bodies are *instruments* and *servants of righteousness*¹, *vessels* which their souls *possess in sanctification and honour*^m. Some of them are peculiarly dignified in the service of God, like those utensils which were both of special use and ornament in the sanctuary. The head of a saint, like the candlesticks of the tabernacle, holds a constant light of divine truth and wisdom; while his heart, like the sacred altar, retains a never-to-be-extinguished fire of divine love and zeal: his organs of speech are like the silver trumpets, and other musical instruments of the sanctuary devoted to the glory of God, and employed to praise him *in the beauty of holiness*ⁿ; while the soul that resides in this tabernacle, like the anointed *priest*^o, continually officiates before God, and devotes her noblest powers to him for a spiritual sacrifice. Nay, the bodies of christians are sometimes called temples: *What, know you not*, says the apostle, *that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you*^p?

¹ Rom. 6. 13. and 18.

^m 1 Theff. 4. 4.

ⁿ 1 Chron. 16. 29.

^o 2 Chron. 20. 21.

^p 1 Cor. 6. 19.

And

And again—*Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them*^q, &c. They are temples now in comparison of what they formerly were before conversion, when they were *cages of every unclean and hateful bird*^r; but tabernacles compared with what they shall be when modell'd *according to the pattern in the mount*^s, I mean the temple of our Lord's sacred body^s, the present glory of which was formerly represented in his transfiguration on mount Tabor.

The second thing we are to consider, is,

II. The uneasy situation of a believer's soul, while she dwells in this earthly tabernacle, express'd by her being *burdened*.

How slight and fickle soever these tabernacles are in respect of their natural frailty and mutability; yet they are heavy burdens to the souls that inhabit them, in regard of the troubles they expose them to: and tho they are honour'd in the service of God in some degree together with their souls, yet in their present imperfect state they are rather incumbrances than helps to them, and occasion them much more affliction than comfort; in-
somuch that experienc'd christians, tho they find it reasonable to rejoice, as the younger Jews did at the building of the second temple, that their bodies are made sacred taber-

^q 2 Cor. 6. 12.

^r Rev. 18. 2.

^s Heb. 8. 5.

^s John 2. 21.

nacles, and render'd fit in some measure for the service of God in the state of grace ; yet they see much more cause to bewail their unhappiness, when they consider how much less capable they are either of serving or enjoying him in their present condition, than they shall be in their future state of glory ; as the old inhabitants of Zion could not refrain weeping, while the view of the foundation of the new temple brought to mind the greater beauty and glory of their antient one ^t.

Both the word of God and experience assure us, that *the afflictions of the righteous are many* ^u, while their souls sojourn in these incommodious tenements : and therefore our apostle seems rather to call them tabernacles, in allusion to those of common, than to that of sacred use ; tho we have not thought meet to omit comparing them to the latter, as some alleviation to the discouraging weight christians groan under from those inconveniences and evils occasion'd by their frail bodies, which give them a far greater resemblance to the former. For,

1. Our bodies occasion much of the ignorance and error of our souls, and much obstruct their advances in knowledge and truth.

2. They cause us to sin, and hinder our progress in holiness.

3. They procure us much sorrow and misery, and prevent us of much comfort and joy.

^t Ezra 3. 12, 13.

[^u Psal. 34. 19.

1. They occasion much ignorance and error in our souls, and hinder our proficiency in knowledge and truth; and this many ways.

(1.) The necessities of our bodies lay claim to a considerable part of our time, and to a great share of our thoughts; and thereby hinder us from meditating on spiritual objects with that constant application of mind which is requisite for the advancement of our knowledge, and for the enlargement of our experience to any great degree. Since men were condemned to toil and labour, and *to eat their bread in the sweat of their brows*^v, they are all more or less incumber'd with worldly cares; and spend no small part of their time either in projecting and providing what they shall eat and drink, and what they shall put on; or in refreshing their bodies with food and sleep, and other necessary recreations, especially when they are very weak and crazy: so that the opportunities of meditation but seldom occur, and when they do, are often abridged by many unthought of avocations. Thus while we are busied about the conservation of our bodies, our souls must needs want that cultivation and improvement they are capable of.

And this time were the less to be regretted, if we kept within the due limits assign'd us by the divine will, in providing for our bodies, and did not foolishly embarrass ourselves with

^v Gen. 3. 17, 18, 19.

many fruitless employments and unnecessary cares. Nature, especially when instructed by grace, would be satisfied with mean things, which much less time would procure than what is usually spent in over-delicate pampering, and in over-curious attiring these mortal bodies; in endeavouring to make a splendid appearance in the world ourselves at present, and to furnish our posterity with means of filling up a great figure in succeeding times. We are so very prone to debase our souls to an inordinate pursuit of the pleasures of sense, the regular and moderate use of which was wisely ordain'd for the preservation of our bodies, that the most mortified persons find it no easy task to keep a due *æquilibrium*, in providing for the necessities of the soul and body; so as to give the one convenient recruits, without much disturbing the operations of the other; to entertain the body with food and raiment, and such like conveniences, without tainting the soul with earthly-mindedness and sensuality.

Nor does the variety of worldly cares and labours only waste our precious time, but strangely dissipate and unsettle our thoughts, and accustom our minds to an habit of unsteadiness and wavering: so that when we would strictly set ourselves to serious meditation, the traces of those many other objects we have lately conversed with, start up in our fancies before we are aware, and defeat our

our purposes of contemplating those spiritual things we had before us.

And we are the more apt to be thus amused by sensible things, because in our present state we are more intimately acquainted with these than with spiritual objects. And things that are within the ken of our senses often make a very agreeable impress on them, and thereby easily attract our thoughts to them; whereas those that are spiritual and invisible, and therefore not to be relished by flesh and blood, those that do not at present exist, but must be sought for in futurity, soon escape our attention and disappear, unless the eye of faith be kept in a very steady posture, which is difficult to be done amidst the various diversions the senses and fancy are continually giving us.

So that if great attention and constant application of mind are necessary to the obtaining of a great degree of true knowledge; if it be needful, as the wise man directs, to incline *our ears to wisdom, and to apply our hearts to understanding*^w—*to seek her as silver, and to search for her as hid treasures*^x: *not to suffer her sayings to depart from our eyes, and to keep them in the midst of our hearts*^y: *to hear her, watching daily at her gates, and waiting at the posts of her doors*^z, &c. Then it is certain that our bodies in their present condition must needs be a hindrance to our know-

^w Prov. 2. 2.

^x Ver. 4.

^y Prov. 4. 21.

^z Prov. 8. 34.

ledge of *the deep things of God*^a ; seeing they take up so much of our time, and ingross so many of our thoughts.

(2.) They not only hinder our progress in the way of knowledge, but also cause us to wander out of it ; and as they keep us in much ignorance, so they betray us into many errors. Sensible things, by means of our bodies, so easily stir up our passions, and so strongly impress our imaginations, that our understandings are often clouded, and our judgments corrupted by them. The lower region of the soul sends up so many gross and dark steams into the upper, that we seldom attain that clearness and simplicity of mind which is requisite to make a judgment of things, after an unbiass'd and uncorrupt manner : for truth is so commonly attended with self-denial, and our carnal interest so much on the side of error, that when we *confer with flesh and blood*^b, as we are too prone to do in our inquiries after truth, 'tis no wonder if we embrace its opposite, *putting darkness for light, and light for darkness*^c.

(3.) While we are in the body, we dwell with men that have bodies made like ours, and who by means of their near alliance and intimate conversation with us, often lead us out of the way of truth, and cause us to adopt those false opinions which they have foolishly

^a 1 Cor. 2. 10.

^b Gal. 1. 16.

^c Isa. 5. 20.

entertained, especially such of them as are made current by long prescription, and by the common vogue of mankind. For we easily receive impressions from the motions and manners of those with whom we usually converse: as *iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend*^d. And as *in water face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man*^e. The very looks and gestures of our fellow-creatures engage us into a kind of sympathy with them: their words, their actions, and the very air of their countenances are so artificially managed, when they would persuade us to embrace their sentiments, that they too often strike the organs of our senses and imagination powerfully enough to inspire our minds with the same sentiments and passions which are cherished in their own. And thus the conversation even of great and wise and good men, sometimes has an evil influence upon us, because we are apt to give that deference to them, which is only owing to truth; and to treat them as if they were lords *over our faith*, rather than *helpers of our joy*^f.

(4.) Again, as by expending so much of our time, and so much of the strength of our thoughts in the pursuit of earthly things, and by abandoning ourselves to the ill conduct of our own passions, and to the groundless opinions of others; the eyes of our minds must

^d Prov. 27. 17.

^e Ver. 19.

^f 2 Cor. 1. 24.

needs be render'd unsteddy, dim and short-sighted, and so give us confus'd and sometimes false representations of things: so that folly and guilt of our own, which conspire with those other unhappy circumstances to occasion our wanderings, often provoke the *spirit of truth, in whose light we see light* ^g, to withdraw his divine beams, and to leave us groping in the dark, as a just punishment for having diverted our minds from the lovely object of truth, to follow the giddy illusions of our own fancies, or those of other men; and as a proper mean to convince us, that *they that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy* ^h.

'Tis then sufficiently evident, that the mortal bodies wherein the souls of believers reside, are a great occasion of their ignorance and error, and upon this account must needs be burdensom to them.

As they are also,

2. Because they are a great occasion of their sins, and much obstruct their progress in holiness. And,

(1.) This is a necessary consequence of what has been already insisted on; for ignorance and error not only render our good works very imperfect, but often make us guilty of evil ones. Our false notions excite irregular desires, and these issue in criminal actions: for if the understanding be clouded, and the judgment perverted, the will must

^g Psal. 36. 9.

^h Jonah 2. 8.

needs go astray ; if we have false conceptions of things in our heads, we shall have disorderly motions in our hearts, and *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*ⁱ ; and other external actions are govern'd by the inward inclinations of the soul, as the hand of a watch is guided by the spring and wheels of the movement.

And as error occasions sin, so, on the other hand, sin is the cause of error. The corruption of the heart sends up dark mists into the head ; and when the will has taken a wrong bias, it perverts the judgment. We are very prone to believe those notions to be true, which indulge our carnal inclinations ; and are easily induced to judge that lawful and fit to be done, which we find ourselves strongly inclined to do : and by this means we are tempted to *call evil good, and good evil*^k. And if *purity of heart* clarifies the mind, and disposes it to *see and know God*^l, then the pollution of sin must necessarily render it unfit for divine contemplation. Thus error and sin, in a continual succession, propagate and uphold one another.

(2.) Original corruption is so interwoven in the very constitution of our bodies since the fall, that our souls are no sooner join'd to them, but they are polluted by them : we are *shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin*^m, and consequently are *estranged even from the*

ⁱ Mat. 12. 34.

^k Isa. 5. 20.

^l Mat. 5. 8.

^m Psal. 51. 5.

womb, and go astray as soon as we are born, speaking lyesⁿ. Sin, that defil'd the souls of our first parents, did not only spread its malignant influence on their bodies, but extends its contagion to those of their posterity thro'out all generations: so that all human bodies being tainted with the subtle venom at their very formation, convey the infection to the souls that join them, by means of the close union the great Creator contracts between them. 'Tis no wonder then that a disease so deeply rooted is not to be intirely cured, while our bodies remain in their present state: and tho that principle of holiness which reigns in the hearts of believers, not only bridles, but in some degree subdues and mortifies this inveterate evil, yet while these houses of clay retain their present form and texture, they will never be intirely purified from this fretting leprosy: this old leaven will not be utterly purged out, however grace may allay its sourness; nor this root of bitterness be quite extirpated, however grace may crop its branches: but these bodies will still cramp the motions of their souls when they aspire heaven-ward, and too often incline them to mind earthly things; till death shall open them a door of liberty, and by dislodging them from their uneasy dwelling, deliver them from all the incumbrances under which they groan.

ⁿ Psal. 58. 3.

(3.) As our bodies are the means of conveying those vicious impressions that originally corrupt our souls ; so they often prove the unhappy instruments of putting the sinful projects of our minds in execution, and are prompt and ready to fulfil those evil desires which they have first excited. So that we have occasion, even after our regeneration, to complain, with the apostle, of *a law in our members warring against the law of our minds* ° ; seeing the members of our bodies often become the occasion of finishing sin, as well as of beginning it. And tho the evil inclinations and purposes of our hearts make us sufficiently guilty in the sight of that God who *searcheth the heart and trieth the reins* p ; yet the execution of these sinful dictates of the mind by the members of the body, render us yet more criminal, both in the account of God and men : for this is to *finish and bring forth* sin after it is *conceived* q ; 'tis in a sort to advance it to its height and perfection, to cherish the cockatrice-egg till it becomes a *fiery flying serpent* r. And the more publick the commission of any sin is, the more offensive it is ; for this is by external actions to justify and approve the inward impurity of the heart ; 'tis to add to the visible disorder and confusion of the world ; to lay stumbling-blocks by the evil example of it in the way of the weak, and to give occasion to

° Rom. 7. 23.

p Jer. 17. 10.

q James 1. 15.

r Isa. 14. 29.

libertines to blaspheme religion ; 'tis openly to oppose and affront the Almighty : and when a man sins after this manner, he may be said in the language of the prophet, *so far to have done evil things as he could*^f. In a word, what the apostle James says of one member of the body, *viz. the tongue*, may be also said of the rest of them when abus'd to sin, they are *a world of iniquity—they set on fire the course of nature, and are themselves set on fire of hell*^g. *They are unruly evils, full of deadly poison*^h. And this may serve to explain our apostle's meaning, when he calls our sins our *flesh*ⁱ, our *members*^j, and *the deeds of the body*^k.

(4.) The natural affinity that is between our bodies and other material things, is a great snare to us, and betrays us into sin, as well as misleads us into error, as we have observed before ; so that we meet with almost as many temptations as we meet with sensible objects in the world : for these sometimes work so much upon our love and hope and fear, according to the sensations of pleasure or pain they occasion us, that they steal away our affections from God, whom we ought to *love with all our heart*^l, *with all our soul and with all our strength*^m ; in whom alone we

^f Jer. 3. 5.

^g James 3. 5, 6.

^h Ver. 8.

ⁱ Gal. 5. 17.

^j Col. 3. 5.

^k Rom. 8. 13.

^l Deut. 6. 5.

^m Psal. 62. 1, 2.

ought

ought to put our *trust*^z, and whom alone we ought to *sanctify* in our hearts, in making him our *fear* and our *dread*^a.

(5.) Lastly, the natural grossness and frailty of our bodies in this mortal state, occasion our moral imperfections and wanderings as well as our intellectual ones: they are not refin'd enough to receive, nor strong enough to bear those bright discoveries of the glory of God which are necessary to render us free from error, by keeping our minds continually intent on him, in viewing his infinite perfections; nor those large effusions of his love requisite to preserve us from sin, by keeping our hearts constant and fervent in loving and desiring him. No—these earthen vessels are too mean, too narrow, and too brittle, to contain so vast a stock of heavenly treasure, as is needful to make and keep us sinless: and because we *can't see God and live*^b in this mortal state, therefore we cannot live without sin.

3. We are now to shew that the bodies of believers are burdensom to them, because they occasion them much sorrow and misery, and prevent them of much comfort and joy. And,

1st, Upon their own account.

(1.) What has been already said under the foregoing heads, proves this to a great degree. For seeing a believer desires nothing

^z Psal. 20. 7.

^a Isa. 8. 13.

^b Exod. 33. 20.

so much as immunity from error, and a clear view of truth, freedom from sin, and a state of consummate purity and holiness, that he may know God intimately, and love him perfectly ; because this intellectual and moral perfection together make up the glory and happiness of a rational creature ; it hence follows, that when he reflects on the contrary disadvantages which attend his present state, when he considers that his soul is lodg'd in a body, which, both like a veil, hinders him from a clear sight of God, and as a false glass, gives him a delusive view of creatures ; when he feels it not only as a weight that retards his motion toward spiritual things, but as an enchanting bond that unites him to this material world : this must needs touch his mind after a very sensible manner, and give him no small occasion of sorrow.

(2.) The frail bodies of the saints, as well as those of other men, expose them to many of the common afflictions of this life. The strict laws of union, by which our Creator has join'd human souls and bodies together, render the former very sensible of the various alterations which befall the latter : so that many little things that assault us outwardly, give us a great deal of trouble within ; and those injuries and distempers which our bodies suffer, are capable of exciting very painful and grievous sensations in our minds.

And

And because we are necessitated, for the conservation and entertainment of our bodies, to converse with things agreeable to their nature, which are seldom procured without some difficulty, and never enjoyed without danger; our minds frequently anticipate trouble and misery by their cares in seeking, and their fears of losing these worldly accommodations.

(3.) Because the near alliance of our bodies to the things of this world, is very apt to engage our minds into a fond and eager pursuit of them, it seems good to the all-wise and gracious God, sometimes to *hedge up our way with thorns* by his providence^c, to prevent our straying from him, and to mix wormwood with our carnal delights, to wean us from them, and to fix our affections on things above; as also to try and exercise our faith and patience, and other graces, as he did those of Job, by various disappointments and afflictions.

Nay, sometimes the disorders and miscarriages, into which our bodies ensnare our souls, provoke the holy and just God to withdraw the light of his countenance, and to hide himself from us in displeasure; and while *the terrors of God set themselves in array against us*^d, and his *dread makes us afraid*^e, our consternation and sorrow cannot but be very great. For those who have tasted the

^c Hof. 2. 6.^d Job 6. 4.

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^e Chap. 13. 21.

ravishing

petition heaven for a release from these bodies that expose them to so many assaults, and to cry with the persecuted prophet, *It is enough, now O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers* ^p.

2dly, As a good man finds many occasions of sorrow in himself, so *the troubles of his heart are enlarged* ^q by the sins and miseries of others: his zeal for the honour of God exposes him to afflictions on every side, and his extensive charity makes him partake of the miseries of his fellow-creatures.

(1.) When he looks abroad into the world, he beholds innumerable objects capable of exciting his sorrow. *His righteous soul*, like that of just Lot, is *vexed from day to day, with the unlawful deeds, and filthy conversation of the wicked*, while he sees and hears their impieties ^r: when he considers the wickedness and *oppression* that is *under the sun* ^s, the injustice and barbarity of men one towards another; the indignities and affronts they offer their maker by their blasphemy and profaneness; the cruelty they exercise on themselves by their intemperance and sensuality; and the deplorable folly and stupidity of those herds of sinners who go merrily on towards destruction, who make *a mock at sin* ^s, and like mad men cast abroad fire-brands, arrows, and death, saying, *are not we in sport* ^t?

^p 1 Kings 19. 4.

^q Psal. 25. 17.

^r 2 Pet. 2. 7, 8.

^s Eccl. 4. 1.

^s Prov. 14. 9.

^t Prov. 26. 18, 19.

tho they are to expect they will be thrown back into their own bosoms; who spend their precious moments in sin, and laugh and trifle away their time, even when they are ready to enter into everlasting burnings: when he sees, I say, and considers all this, it deeply affects his mind with those sentiments of grief, which the same kind of reflections occasioned the pious psalmist, and to which he gave some vent by addressing himself to his God in such expressions as these; *I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy word^u. Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law^v. And again, rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law^w.*

Nay, when he turns his eyes to the church of God, to allay that sorrow which the sad prospect of a *whole world lying in wickedness*^x has given him; amongst those objects which are proper to inspire joy and pleasure, he'll find others no less capable of stirring up sorrow and anguish in his soul. The scandalous conversation of some professing godliness, even in the primitive church, drew sad complaints and tears from the blessed apostle Paul. *Many walk, says he, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ^y, &c.*

^u Psal. 119. 158.^v Ver. 53.^w Ver. 136.^x 1 John 5. 19.^y Philip. 3. 18, 19.

The pernicious principles which some entertain, the vicious practices which others embrace, the fierce contentions which some wickedly raise and foment, and which others weakly continue; the guile and subtlety of some that prove hypocrites, and the ignorance and weakness of others that are sincere, all tend to aggravate the burden of a discerning christian while he dwells in a mortal body, and is thereby obliged to converse with mortal men.

(2.) He is of so publick a spirit, and of so charitable a temper, that while he dwells in the body, his eye, which beholds so many scenes of misery, cannot but affect his heart^z; so that he is not only a witness of the sufferings of many miserable people that fall under his notice, but a partner in their sorrows too; and finds himself inclined by a generous sympathy to *weep with them that weep*^a, as the apostle exhorts the Romans; of which good disposition of mind himself was an eminent pattern, *Who is weak, says he, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not*^b? And the spirit of the holy Job was framed after the same manner, even in the time of his prosperity; *Did not I weep, says he, for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor*^c?

But the afflictions of the church of God in general, or of those particular members

^z Lam. 3. 31.

^a Rom. 12. 15.

^b 2 Cor. 11. 29.

^c Job 30. 25.

of it with whom he is especially conversant, cannot but make a very deep impression on his mind ; and because he *prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy*^d, therefore her calamities are a chief occasion of his sorrow : so that he is sometimes ready to refuse to be comforted, and to cry with the prophet Isaiah, *Look away from me, I will weep bitterly : labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people*^e. Or to utter the wish of the weeping prophet ; *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears ; that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people*^f.

'Tis moreover worthy of a remark, that we are so much more sensible of the pains and sorrows, than we are of the delights and comforts of this life ; that it is common for one affliction to give us great disturbance in the midst of many pleasures, and by the mixture of its bitter ferment, to make us disrelish all our temporal enjoyments.

These are the burdens which make the souls of believers desirous of changing their state ; which is,

III. The third thing under consideration,

And this is express'd,

(1.) Negatively ; *not that we would be unclothed.*

^d Psal. 137. 6.

^e Isa. 22. 4.

^f Jer. 9. 1. See also, Jer. 13. 17. and 14. 17.

(2.) Positively ; *but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*

Which words of the apostle, some will have to proceed from a supposition which they fancy he had, that himself and some of his contemporaries should live to the great day of the Lord, and that they should not be unclothed of their bodies by death, but have them suddenly changed, like those of Enoch and Elias ; because he elsewhere says, *Behold, I shew you a mystery ; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed ; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*^s. And again : *We which are alive, and remain to the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep ; for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, &c. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord*^h.

But I can't think this is the sense of the apostle in the words of our text, because he seems not to have expected the second coming of Christ in the age wherein he lived, seeing he prophesies of those troubles that should befall the church in future ages, by the subtlety and power of antichristⁱ ; and because it is not to be supposed that he had

^s 1 Cor. 15. 51, 52.

^h 1 Thess. 4. 15, 16, 17.

ⁱ 2 Thess. 2. 1 Tim. 4.

any expectation of surviving those many ages of sufferings that the church was to be exercised with, seeing God was pleased to reveal to him *how great things he should suffer for his name's sake*^k; and seeing he was able to prophesy of his own dissolution in express terms, as he does to his son Timothy, *I am now ready to be offered*, says he, *and the time of my departure is at hand*. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course*^l, &c. Nay, that he and other christians not only expected, but desired to die, is evident from those words of his a little after our text; *We are confident and willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*^m: for this absence from the body expresses the soul's separation from it, and is inconsistent with a supposition of having their bodies transform'd in a moment without dying, as the bodies of those saints shall be, who shall be found alive at the second coming of Christ.

The meaning of the words rather seems to be thus, *We groan—not for that we would be unclothed*; q. d. “not simply and absolutely “to be divested of our bodies, *but to be clothed upon*; q. d. to be adorn'd with glory “and bliss. Death is not desirable to us in “itself, but as it is the way to happiness and “immortality.” For the saints have the sentiments of human nature common to other

^k Acts 9. 16.^l 2 Tim. 4. 6, 7. See also, | Acts 20. 22. 24, 38.| ^m 2 Cor. 5. 8.

men ;

men ; their souls are join'd to their bodies with the same bonds, and they are conscious of inward reluctances when death is before them. Our blessed Saviour himself was not exempt from natural fears, but had an innocent averſation from miſery and death, which the reſolution of his will ſuperſeded, as appears by his prayer in the garden : *O my father, if it be poſſible let this cup paſs from me ; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*ⁿ. Thus it is with believers, they naturally ſhrink at the apprehenſions of death ; they do not deſire to die ſimply, becauſe they would be rid of their bodies, for they are a part of themſelves, and ſelf-preſervation is a principle deeply inlaid in human nature ; but becauſe of two evils, one of which is inevitable, the leaſt is to be choſen. Seeing they muſt either be abſent from the body, or be abſent from God ; be diſlodged from their earthly houſes, or infeſted with ſin and ſorrow ; they cannot but on the moſt deliberate thoughts conclude, that 'tis beſt for them to be unclothed of fleſh and blood, which cannot, in its preſent condition, *inherit the kingdom of God*^o ; that they may be clothed with perfect ſanctity and glory, immediately upon the diſſolution of their bodies : and this in order to be clothed with glorious and immortal bodies, at the happy day of the reſurrection of the juſt. For I take both the glorification of the ſeparate ſouls of the ſaints,

ⁿ Mat. 26. 39.^o 1 Cor. 15. 50.

and their farther glory when invested with resurrection-bodies, to be comprehended in the text. That the former is included, is evident from the apostle's saying a little after, *We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*^p: and that we are not to exclude the latter, appears from the last clause in our text, which the apostle mentions as the hope of believers, and the reason of their willingness to change their state, namely, *that mortality might be swallowed up of life*; that is, that mortality might vanish and disappear, and eternal life take place and succeed it, the full accomplishment of which cannot be before the resurrection, when these *mortal* bodies *shall have put on immortality*; for then, as this apostle expressly tells us, *that saying, equivalent to this, shall be brought to pass, Death is swallowed up in victory*^q. I shall therefore consider the words in both respects, seeing the immediate glory of the departed spirits of holy men, and their ultimate perfection and bliss, when rejoin'd to their immortalized bodies, do both dispose those who hope for a share in this glory, to a willingness to be unclothed of their mortal bodies.

(1.) The glory which the saints hope to arrive at immediately upon their leaving their bodies, inclines them to be willing they should suffer a dissolution by death.

^p Ver. 8.

| ^q 1 Cor. 15. 53, 54.

That a believer enters into a state of bliss immediately after death, depends upon a supposition of the immortality of the soul of man, and so of its capacity of happiness or misery when separate from the body; which is a principle so generally allow'd, that I shall not insist long on the proof of it, but content myself in shewing you, that our apostle firmly believ'd it, and expresses it plainly enough in several other passages of his epistles, as well as in this chapter.

Here he tells us, as has been observed before, that he expected to be *present with the Lord*, while *absent from the body*^r; which words are too plain for our purpose to need a comment. He elsewhere confesses himself in a great straight, whether to chuse life or death, because of the great advantages he should have on the one hand of enjoying the beatifick sight of God by dying; and on the other of doing him and his church much service by his life. *To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall chuse, I wot not; for I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you*^f, &c. Now can it be thought if he had believed that his soul would be rendred by death as insensible and unactive as his body, that he would have put this supposed deep

^r Ver. 8.

| ^f Phil. 1. 21, 22, &c.

sleep

sleep in the ballance, against a capacity and opportunity of serving God and his church here in the honourable station allotted him ; and thereby of enjoying communion with his Lord and master in his ordinances at present, and of adding weight to his immortal crown of glory in the world to come ? Is not a state of serving God, tho attended with imperfection and sufferings, much to be preferred to an utter incapacity of serving him ? Is it not infinitely better to see the divine being, tho *as thro' a glass* ^s, and obscurely, than not to see him at all ? and to love him after an imperfect manner, than to be unable to form the least feeble desire toward him ? and for the soul to follow him weakly, than to be deprived of all spiritual motion ? Is it to be imagined, that the wise and holy apostle would have been held in a doubtful suspense under these considerations, which would easily have suggested themselves upon a supposition of the mortality of his soul ? and would he have confessed he found any difficulty to determine his judgment in so plain a case ? Again, It is not to be denied, that he believed the soul of man capable of enjoying bliss when separated from the body, seeing he professes himself unable to determine, whether his own were not once so separated for a while ; *whether in the body*, says he, *or out of the body*, *I cannot tell*, *God knoweth* ; when he was *caught up to the third heaven*, and

^s 1 Cor. 13. 12.

fill'd with divine pleasures in hearing *words unutterable* ^t by mortals here below. And why does he speak of *the spirits of just men made perfect*, as now making a part of the universal church, and as the companions of angels in the other world, *Heb. 12. 22, 23.* if those spirits are in the same condition with the bodies they once possess'd, in a state of insensibility and death? And does he not call the body a tabernacle in the text, to signify that it is separable from its spiritual inhabitant?

That which seems to induce some, notwithstanding these and such other passages of scripture, to imagine the soul to be mortal, is the certain knowledge they have of the mortality of the body: but is it reasonable to conclude, because matter is divisible and dissoluble, that therefore spirits may be divided and dissolved too? that because extended substances are seen to corrupt, therefore substances, capable of reasoning and willing, must needs undergo the same change? and because the organs of the body are rendered useless by death, that the faculties of the soul all pass under the same fate? What ground is there for such wild consequences? what appearance of reason in such vain imaginations?

If then we may safely conclude with our apostle, that the separate souls of the saints are capable of happiness; we may as well

^t 2 Cor. 12. 2, 3, 4.

conclude with him too, that they shall enjoy it, when strip'd of those bodies which keep them absent from him, *with whom is the fountain of life* ^u and bliss; that instead of earthly houses they shall possess heavenly mansions, and retiring from the visible, be made happy in the invisible world: that when the eyes of their bodies are clos'd with the deep sleep of death, those of their minds shall see the Lord; and when their blood ceases to move in their veins, their wills shall be most vigorously inclined towards him who is the proper object of their desires, and center of their rest.

But the completion of their bliss will be,

(2.) When their souls shall be clothed with glorious bodies; the expectation of which, as well as of the immediate glory of their souls, tends to disarm death of its terror, and to make them willing to be unclothed of their mortal bodies.

This hope is grounded upon so many express testimonies of scripture, some of which prophetically assure the universal accomplishment of it, as others historically attest the fact itself in several particular instances of persons raised from the dead, that 'tis not necessary for me to insist on the proof of it; especially seeing all that deserve the name of christians, and almost all that assume it, profess the belief of it. 'Tis more to my present purpose to say something of the excellent

^u Psal. 36. 9.

properties of those bodies which shall obtain this happy resurrection.

We are assured by our apostle, that both the matter and form of them shall be greatly refined; those earthly bodies shall become celestial; that which is *sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption*; that which is *sown in dishonour, raised in glory*; that which is *sown in weakness, raised in power*; and that which is *sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body*^v. Their matter shall be so highly purified and exalted, that in opposition to their former grossness and earthliness, they are term'd spiritual and heavenly bodies; for matter is said to be spiritual when 'tis much refin'd. And there is a vast disparity in this respect among material things: what a mighty difference do we see between the earth on which we tread, and that glorious luminary that inlightens the world? yet both are material substances. Does not the great author of the world by this instance teach us, that he is able to advance the matter of our vile bodies to a very high degree of purity and fineness? for our blessed Saviour assures us, that *the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father*^w; and the prophet Daniel, speaking of the resurrection, says, *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever*^x.

^v 1 Cor. 15. 40, 41, &c.

^w Mat. 13. 43.

^x Dan. 12. 2, 3.

And

And of this glory God was pleased to give some representation in the dazzling lustre of Moses and Stephen; but especially in the transfiguration of our Saviour, whose face *shined as the sun, and whose raiment was white as the light*¹, in the view of some of his disciples.

And the above-mentioned expressions may as well be interpreted descriptive of the beauty and elegancy of the form of those raised bodies, as of the fineness of their matter; for it is not to be doubted but the one will be suitable to the other. And there's reason to suppose that all the beauties of this present world may pass for pieces of deformity, in comparison with the exact shape and proportion, the charming features, the bright complexion, and the sweet and noble air of those heavenly bodies, which shall be *fashion'd like to the glorious body of our Lord, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*².

And it may well be concluded that they will be as useful and serviceable as they will be ornamental and glorious; that the happiness of the souls of the saints shall be advanced by means of their re-union to these spiritual bodies, which the Almighty must needs frame for excellent purposes; that instead of being clogs and weights, they shall be as wheels and wings to the happy minds that shall possess and govern them; that instead

¹ Mat. 17. 2.

of being receptacles of sin, they'll be vessels of sanctity: that whereas now they are as thick veils that hinder their prospect, they'll then be as transparent mediums to promote their knowledge: and as they now are like mourning weeds, and occasion *the spirit of heaviness*, they shall then become *garments of praise*^a, and instruments of joy and melody. O happy state! when the body shall no more divert the mind from contemplating the divine being, or seduce the heart from loving him; no more be disturb'd with diseases to give the soul either pain or fear; no more be liable to corruption and death: but become an occasion of the improvement of her wisdom and holiness, and of the advancement of her eternal joy and happiness.

This is something of that which is to be collected from those descriptions the scripture gives of the future state of the immortal bodies of the saints. And if the vessel shall be thus adorn'd, how glorious will the treasure be that shall be lodged in it? If the house shall be so embellished, how bright and beautiful will the noble inhabitant of it be? For the Almighty is a God of order, and does all things in due proportion: therefore 'tis but reasonable to think that the souls of the saints shall be as much superior to their bodies in their kind and degree of glory, as they are in the rank and order of nature. But after the most lively sallies of fancy, and the strongest

^a Isa. 61. 3.

efforts of thought, we must content ourselves with imperfect notions of this state of unconceivable felicity; for a particular and exact knowledge of it is too wonderful for us, it is high, we cannot attain unto it^b. Yet the divine word does certify us in general of the thing itself, that the souls of the righteous, and in due time their bodies too, shall inherit glory: so that they have reason to say, with an assurance like that of our apostle, *We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*^c. Or like that of Job; *I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And tho after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, tho my reins be consumed within me*^d. Or that of the apostle John; *Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*^e. Tho it doth not yet fully appear what they shall be, yet this they know, they shall be like God, and see him as he is; they shall always behold his face, and always be enamour'd of his beauty; always receiving large manifestations of favour from him, and always returning the highest expressions of

^b Psal. 139. 6.^c 2 Cor. 5. 1.^d Job 19. 25, 26, 27.^e 1 John 3. 2.

love to him ; ever moving towards him by the most ardent desires, and ever resting in him with the most perfect satisfaction.

And now is it any wonder, if, on the one hand, the weighty burdens which a saint bears, and on the other the perfect rest and happiness which he expects, make him,

IV. Express both his great sense of the weight that presses him, and his fervent desire of the deliverance promised him, by *groaning* ?

For this term as well signifies a desire of ease, as a sense of pain ; a longing after future happiness, as well as an uneasiness under present misery ; because these sentiments meet together in the soul, and mutually excite one another : the more a man feels his misery, the more he desires deliverance ; and the more he longs for a state of bliss, the more uneasy he is in a state of trouble. And therefore groaning and desiring are used in scripture as terms of like import ; as appears by those words of the psalmist, *Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee*^f. And as our apostle says, *the whole creation groans*^g—to signify, what he before calls, *the earnest expectation of the creation*^h ; so he expresses the desire and hope of believers after the same manner : *And not only they*, says he, *but ourselves also who have*

^f Psal. 38. 9.

^g Rom. 8. 22.

^h Ver. 19.

received the first-fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodyⁱ.

A passage that runs parallel with our text, which says, believers groan—to be clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life; and with those words just before it, *For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven^k.*

Tho the souls of the wicked, as well as those of the righteous, are incumber'd with mortal bodies, which occasion them many of the same kind of evils, and some of them to a far greater degree; for if their afflictions are not always so many, their errors and sins are more: and tho they desire happiness in general as well as the others, yet they do not groan under the weight of these burdens, and after that glorious state of liberty we have been discoursing of, as the others do.

The reasons why the deep sense of these grievances, and earnest aspirations after deliverance are to be found in the minds of holy men, and in theirs only, deserve to be, at least briefly, inquired into.

(1.) The strong and lively convictions a regenerate man has received, both of the great evil and folly of sin, and of the excellency and beauty of a state of perfect holiness, which is not to be enjoy'd but in the other world, make him weary of his pre-

ⁱ Ver. 23.

^k 1 Cor. 5. 2.

sent state, and very desirous of a change : he is so far enlightned by the spirit of truth, and he sometimes looks upon sin with so strict and severe an eye, that he sees that deformity and ugliness in it, which others never discern, or so much as imagine. He measures the guilt of sin, by the object against whom it is committed ; and accounts it infinitely evil, because directly opposite to that God who is infinitely good. He weighs his iniquities together with the many aggravations that attend them ; and calls to mind against how much grace and love, against how much light and knowledge, against how many calls and warnings from God, and against how many vows and resolutions of his own he has sinned. His conscience is too much enlightned, and too sensible to be appeased and lull'd asleep by the many false glosses which others put on the divine laws ; and by the foolish extenuations and excuses they employ, who *cover their transgressions as Adam, by hiding their iniquity in their bosom*¹. And the more his mind is illuminated, the more sensibly is his heart affected with his guilt and the consequences of it ; so that when he *remembers his affliction and his misery, the wormwood and the gall, his soul is humbled in him*^m. Thus the enlargement of his knowledge gives him occasion of trouble on this account, as we have shewn the imperfection of it does on several others ;

¹ Job 31. 33.| ^m Lam, 3. 19, 20.

and in this respect he finds the saying of the wise man verified, *In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow*ⁿ. A sorrow which sometimes accents his complaints with groans, like that of the apostle, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death*^o?

And the same light that discovers to him the deformity of sin, shews him the contrary beauty of holiness; *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God*, which he has received *thro' the face of Jesus Christ*^p, makes him very desirous of bearing a nearer resemblance to him, to become a copy as like that divine original, as the nature of the subject will allow: in a word, to *be holy, as he is holy*^q. While the wicked, *whose minds the God of this world has blinded*^r, have quite different thoughts of moral purity, they see no such excellency and loveliness in it; and while you attribute perfect holiness to the Almighty, as his essential glory and beauty, are ready to say in their hearts, not only as the daughters of Jerusalem did to the spouse concerning Christ, *What is thy beloved more than another beloved*^t? but as the Jews said of him, *he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we shou'd desire him*^s.

ⁿ Eccles. 1. 18.

^o Rom. 7. 24.

^p 2 Cor. 4. 6.

^q 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16.

^r 2 Cor. 4. 4.

^t Cant. 5. 9.

^s Isa. 53. 2.

(2.) A believer has by the impress of grace received a spiritual inclination to holiness, which makes him *delight in the law of God after the inward man*^t: and therefore the opposition which indwelling sin makes to this divine principle, the many rubs he meets with from that *law in his members which wars against the law of his mind*^v, whereby the vigor of his spiritual motion towards *him whom his soul loves*^u is often abated, can't chuse but give him much disturbance, when he seriously recollects himself, and make him groan after a state of perfect conformity to God, and after a compleat enjoyment of him. This makes him often wish he could mount from a sinful world in Elijah's chariot, to throw himself into the arms of his blessed Lord; tho he knows he must drop his body, as the other did his mantle, at the ascent. Whereas the unregenerate, whose minds are not tinctur'd with the love of God, who have no propension to holiness, but are violently carried along by the stream of their corrupt passions, feel not the like reluctances and conflicts in their souls, and therefore make a mock at those sins which make the others groan.

(3.) Those who have been rescued from the slavery of the devil, and have deserted his kingdom, are the chief objects of his rage and malice; the fury of that roaring lion,

^t Rom. 7. 22.

^v Ver. 23.

^u Cant. 1. 7.

and

and the subtlety of that old serpent, can't but occasion them many fears and troubles, because they are not ignorant of the danger of his artful devices, nor insensible of the pain of his cruel buffetings: and tho they have the honour and happiness to conquer him at last, yet the wounds they sometimes receive from his fiery darts, fill their souls with horror and anguish, during the fierce combats in which they engage; which makes a believer often take up a complaint of his incommodious dwelling in the tabernacle of his body, not unlike that of the psalmist, *Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesekh, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; my soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace*^w. While on the other hand, the tempter endeavours to rock the wicked asleep with sensual delights; and by entertaining them with a thousand dreams of imaginary happiness, makes them desirous of a continuance in this present world, as their only paradise.

(4.) The experience of a believer, who has not only on several occasions taken a near prospect of the world, and so discerned the vanity of it; but has also *tasted and seen that the Lord is good*^x, makes him undervalue the perishing sweets of this life, and earnestly desire a full enjoyment of the substantial pleasures of the other. This makes him argue as Jonathan did, concerning the honey he

^w Psal. 120. 5, 6.

| ^x Psal. 34. 8.

found in the wilderness^y; if this little taste has so enlightned my eyes, and sustained my heart, how much more both light and pleasure shall I receive when I shall enjoy a full repast of the same dainties? He so disrelishes the *meat that perisheth*, after having tasted of the *bread of life*^z, that he cries out with the disciples, *Lord, evermore give me this bread*^a; and having tasted of this *old wine*, he does *not desire new*, because he is convinced *the old is better*^b. The pious soul, that has had some little glances of her beloved, *standing behind the wall, looking forth at the windows, and shewing himself thro' the lattice*^c, longs for a clearer interview; and having heard his charming voice at a distance^d, desires his nearer approach, and the satisfaction of his kind embraces. Whereas the unregenerate, who have never been able to taste the sweetness of the heavenly manna, despise it as *light bread*, and prefer it to the *flesh-pots* and *garlick* of Egypt^e: and because they are unacquainted with the delicious relish of those *rivers of pleasure*, which flow at the *right hand* of God^f, having never tasted any drops of those living waters, find no spiritual thirst after them; but desire rather to lick the *dust of the earth*^g, as if the serpent's curse

^y 1 Sam. 14. 29, 30.

^z John 6. 27.

^a Ver. 33, 34, 35.

^b Luke 5. 39.

^c Cant. 2. 9.

^d Ver. 8.

^e Num. 21. 5.

^f Psal. 16. 11.

^g Gen. 3. 14.

were

were to be esteemed above heavenly blessings.

(5.) A holy man who lives by faith, is able to discern things that are invisible; and by means of this divine perspective, to bring distant things near, and to render future things present; so that all intervals of time and space almost quite disappear during the lively exercise of this grace: and 'tis no wonder if such discoveries of that glory to one that has an assured interest therein, raise fervent desires in his soul after the enjoyment of it; and together with the pressure of the burden he groans under here below, make him sometimes sigh out the words of the psalmist's wish, *O that I had wings like a dove!* for then would I fly away and be at rest^h; while those that live by sense, who are *without hope, and without God in the world*ⁱ, either believe not that there is such a state of bliss to be enjoy'd by any, at least that they are like to have any portion in it themselves; or are so brutish as to despise those pure joys, because they are unattainable in this life, and because they are only prepared for, and adapted to those minds which are refined by grace; an holy conformity to the image of God, being the necessary condition of the beatifick vision of his face.

^h Psal. 55. 6.

ⁱ Eph. 2. 12.

Having now passed thro' the several heads of discourse proposed, I shall add some few reflections by way of use. And,

1. From the description our text gives of the frail body of man, in calling it a tabernacle, I might take occasion to shew not only that the body and soul are substances of a very different kind, that the one differs from the other in several respects, as the inhabitant from the house or tent he dwells in; and that the soul is separable from the body, and may subsist, and be capable of happiness or misery when absent from it, as a man may live when stripp'd of his garment, or exil'd from his habitation, which we have in some measure prov'd already; but farther, that the soul is as much more excellent than the body, as a prince is preferable to the tent wherein he lodges; that there is no comparison to be made between the faculties of the former, and the organs of the latter, tho these are *curiously and wonderfully made*^k; and that the body derives its principal beauty as well as usefulness, from the residence of the soul in it, without which it is a useless lump of inanimate matter, its members all become unactive, its organs all motionless, and its figure soon changes and dissolves into corruption and dust. But I pass over these considerations, to infer from hence,

^k Psal. 139. 14, 15.

2. That it highly concerns us to make our souls our principal care, and to this end to beware of spending too much time, and of employing too many thoughts in making provision for our bodies. What wise man would be at any great expence in adorning and beautifying a feeble and decaying cottage, which the next violent blast of wind is likely to level with the ground? Who but a fool will deny himself necessities, that he may furnish his house with superfluities, or will starve his body to trim his clothes? And who but a greater fool than he will suffer his precious soul to pine and languish under spiritual poverty, while he pampers his vile body with the greatest luxury; and will curiously deck this with gay apparel, while the other is left unadorn'd and naked, as unworthy of his care?

3. Seeing the saints, however burden'd at present, have the prospect of celestial glory before them; this may serve to convince the world, that their state, tho consider'd with the greatest attendance of afflictions, is to be preferred to that of the wicked. 'Tis true, we have before granted that the former find many occasions of sorrow, which the latter are unacquainted with; and that they are much more press'd than these, with some circumstances of those troubles that are common to both. And let us farther suppose that a holy man's life were a continued scene of calamities; suppose his sorrows were yet
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more piercing and grievous, and his mind more sensible of grief, and more inclin'd to ruminate the wormwood and gall of his sufferings; and suppose these were prolong'd to many thousands of years, they would still prove *light* and *short* afflictions, when oppos'd to that *exceeding weight of eternal glory*¹ which raises his expectation; and when compar'd with that load of misery and anguish, which the wicked must groan under to eternity.

Nay, the advantage would certainly fall on the side of the righteous, if they should ballance accounts with the wicked, in regard of their present happiness in this life. For tho a holy man has many great afflictions, he has also many peculiar blessings; and if his *sufferings abound, so does his consolation* too^m: besides, the troubles of the world the less surprize him, because he is taught to expect them; and the pleasures of it are the less desirable to him, because he has learn'd the vanity of them, and because his *affections are set on things above*ⁿ. Whereas the trouble of an earthly mind is inexpressible, when the delights of the world forsake it, because it hath nothing left to lean upon, or to take complacency in: so that if you deprive a sensualist of those objects that occasion carnal pleasure, he is ready to cry out, *Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?*^o!

¹ 2 Cor. 4. 17.

^m 2 Cor. 1. 5.

ⁿ Col. 3. 2.

^o Judges 18. 24.

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And the many restless desires and troublesome projects that agitate his mind, while he pursues the things of the world; and the perplexing fears that often disturb him while he enjoys them, as well as the mortal sorrows that bow down his spirit when he loses them, render him for the most part very uneasy. Add to this the frequent gripes of a guilty conscience, those spiritual terrors that daunt the stoutest heart, and shake the firmest courage, which are often heighten'd toward the period of his days; when the amazed soul finds herself hovering over an abyss of eternal misery, and is unable to lay hold on any thing capable of sustaining her from sinking into that horrible pit; and when the diseases of the body add weight to the troubles of the mind, especially when sickness and death have been hastened by intemperance and folly, and the bones are wrack'd with pain, because *fill'd with the sins of youth* ^p.

Whereas the last days of a saint are commonly his best, because *there is hope in his end* ^q: his joy increases when he sees himself near the confines of the land of promise, after a weary pilgrimage; and ready to lay aside his armour, to bear the palm of victory, and to wear the crown of triumph: his soul springs for joy, when she finds her shackles loosen'd, and her wings preparing for a speedy flight to *the excellent glory* ^r. *Mark the*

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^p Job 20. 11.

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^r 2 Pet. 1. 17.

perfect man, and behold the upright ; for the end of that man is peace ^f.

4. This may administer comfort to believers under all their grievances, and should fortify them against the fear of death. Why should death be formidable to them, whose *life is hid with Christ in God* ^s ? Why should that be a terror to them, which is an occasion of their highest advantage ^t ? Death will only unclothe them, that Christ may adorn them ; take off their mortal rags, that they may be invested with robes of immortality ; knock off their galling fetters, that they may enter into *the glorious liberty of the children of God* ^v ; and rend the intercepting veil, that they may *see him face to face* ^u. Seeing the king of terrors acts rather the part of a friend than of an enemy to them, in silencing their complaints, in appeasing their groans, in drying up their tears, and in accomplishing their wishes : and seeing the dissolution of their bodies, is in order to their resurrection, the pulling down of these frail cottages, in order to raise noble buildings out of them ; they may well cry out with our apostle, *O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory* ^w ?

5. This should moderate the grief of the relations and friends of those who *sleep in Jesus* ^x : they are exhorted by our apostle,

^f Psal. 37. 37.

^s Col. 3. 3.

^t Phil. 1. 21.

^v Rom. 8. 21.

^u 1 Cor. 13. 12.

^w 1 Cor. 15. 55.

^x 1 Thess. 4. 14.

to restrain their trouble, and not to *sorrow like those that have no hope*^y. We ought to consider, that tho their souls have absented themselves from their bodies, they are *present with the Lord*; and tho these are left dead, they shall one day revive again, and receive a glorious form. 'Tis true, the souls of the wicked shall again be clothed with their bodies too; but their resurrection will be more dreadful than their death, because they shall then put on their bodies, as malefactors do their clothes in order to be drawn to execution: whereas the souls of the saints shall put on their glorified bodies at the resurrection, as a bride decks herself with splendid attire the joyful morning of her nuptials.

After all, something remains to be said concerning our deceased brother, whose death has given the occasion of our present assembling; tho I shall not say much, partly because I think it is not necessary in an assembly that knew him so well; and partly, because I think that great modesty of speech is to be observed in such places, and on such occasions as these; and that it becomes those who preach, rather to instruct the living, than to commend the dead; and to excite men to praise their Creator, rather than to amuse them with panegyrics on their fellow-creatures. However, thus much I presume I may warrantably say of our reverend

^y Ver. 13.

brother, whose soul is fled from us to the regions of glory, that he in a good measure experimentally knew what we have been explaining to you. He knew what it was to be burden'd while he lodged in an earthly tabernacle, and thro' the grace of God he knew what it was to be supported under the weight of it, thro' the many services and sufferings he underwent for the sake of his Lord and master, whom he began to follow before he was far advanc'd in years, and who was the support of his old age, as well as the *guide of his youth*. He knew what it was to groan under the burden of sin, having labour'd for many months together under the anguish of a wounded spirit, and under the violent assaults of the subtle tempter ; from which he was at length happily delivered by the favour of God, who dispell'd the black clouds of horror that benighted his soul ; and made him glad with the light of his countenance, which almost constantly shin'd on his spirit thro'out the remainder of his days.

During his last sickness, which proved the means of his dissolution, he seem'd to have much peace, and at some times great joy in his spirit ; declaring himself the better satisfied in this stroke of the divine hand, because he was taken ill while he was employing himself in his ministerial work, and expressing a very great resignation of mind to the will of God, often saying *he was content,*

tent, because in the hands of God; tho he rather chose to be unclothed of his mortal body, and to be with Christ, than to languish a long time under the burden of age and sickness, and to live in a condition incapable of rendering that service to God he was wont to do.

He pass'd the time of his illness without any remarkable cloud on his soul, so far as I could discern, who frequently visited him; and that comfort and joy which sustain'd his soul was temper'd with humility and contrition. He join'd the self-abasing remembrance of his sins to the hope he conceived for pardon; and express'd himself deeply sensible of his own unworthiness, as well as firmly assured of his interest in the all-sufficient sacrifice and intercession of his Redeemer.

God was pleas'd graciously to continue to him the exercise of his reason almost to the last moments of his life. And but a very little before his exit, after having taken his solemn leave of his children and grand-children, and implored the divine blessing on them, he with an audible and distinct voice, committed *his spirit into the hands of God*.

Thus he liv'd, and thus he expir'd, leaving a sweet savour behind him, to the praise and glory of the grace of God, who alone can support the soul under the weight of a declining body, and can refresh her with

spiritual pleasures, while the agonies of death are upon her.

To conclude: Let us *follow him as he followed Christ*^z; let us endeavour to alleviate the burdens we feel, by the prospect of the *glory which is to be revealed*^a; let us *possess our souls in patience*, and our bodies *in sanctification and honour*^b; that when we come to put them off by death, we may chearfully resign them to be deposited in the grave, in hope of reassuming them at the resurrection, endowed with noble qualities like those which adorn the glorified body of our Saviour; who, to procure us this privilege, was pleased to condescend to dwell in an earthly tabernacle like ours, and to be press'd down to the very dust with the weight of our sins^c, our sicknesses and our sorrows^d, and now ever lives to make intercession for his people, that *where he is, there they may be also*^e, that they who *die in the Lord* may ever live with him: for *blest are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth*; yea, *saieth the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them*^f.

^z 1 Cor. 11. 1.

^a Luke 21. 19.

^b 1 Theff. 4. 4.

^c Isa. 53. 4.

^d Mat. 8. 17.

^e John 17. 24.

^f Rev. 14. 13.



A sermon preach'd on *Thursday* the 7th of *September*, 1704. being the day appointed by her majesty for a solemn thanksgiving to almighty God for the late glorious victory obtained over the *French* and *Bavarians* at *Blenheim* near *Hochstet*, by the confederate forces under the command of the duke of *Marlborough*.

S E R M O N V.

Judges V. 31.

So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord : but let them that love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might.——

 H E S E words are the conclusion of a song of triumph, occasioned by an eminent victory which God was pleased to give the troops of Israel, under the conduct of Deborah and Barak, over the army of Jabin king of Canaan, which was commanded by

P 3

Sisera :

Sifera : and 'tis not easy to imagine, that any thing could be better said at the close of such a song ; for from the grateful reflection here made on the glorious things God had already done for his people, their hope is rais'd to expect like future blessings from his favourable providence. Their distress under the tyranny of Jabin was very great, their victory over him very signal and compleat ; and the thanksgiving of Deborah and Barak, together with the rest of the joyful people who shared in the common salvation, was becoming so great an instance of the divine compassion and goodness : and as *their mouths were filled with joy, and their tongues with singing* *, and their hearts were full of gratitude to the Almighty for the great victory they had obtain'd ; so they conclude their song of praise, full of expectation of the like wonders the same divine hand would hereafter effect in favour of the church. *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord : q. d. " Just as this potent army of Canaanites has been routed and overthrown by thy almighty hand ; so let the rest of thy enemies, who oppress thy church, and seek the ruin of thy inheritance, be themselves defeated and destroyed. Compleat, O Lord, the work thou hast begun, till thou hast aveng'd thyself of all thy implacable adversaries."*

* Psal. 126. 2.

And let them that love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might. q. d. " Let
 " all who love the cause and interest, the
 " name and honour of the living and true
 " God, still prosper in their just designs and
 " glorious enterprizes : let those who govern
 " his people, let those who fight their bat-
 " tles and lead them on to victory ; let all
 " who love their God and them become vi-
 " gorous and glorious, as the rising sun when
 " he comes forth to run his race, scattering
 " with his presence both the darkness of the
 " night and the mist of the morning."

The Hebrew idiom will bear these words to be interpreted either as a petition, *so let thy enemies perish*, &c. or as a prediction, *so shall thy enemies perish*, O Lord. And if it be consider'd only as a petition, since it is the prayer of a prophetess who was divinely inspir'd, it must be granted that it was form'd in her mind by the spirit of God, in order to be effectually answer'd, for he inspires no vain requests ; and therefore contains in it the nature of a prophecy.

'Tis moreover worthy a remark, that the glorious victories wrought in the time of the judges, as well as those before in the days of Abraham and Moses, and those obtain'd afterwards in the time of the kings of Judah and Israel, and the eminent deliverance of the church from the Babylonian captivity, seem all to have been figurative representations of the like, nay yet greater glory and
 P 4 success,

success, with which God will crown his church in the latter ages of the world, and of the compleat deliverance he will give her from the captivity of mystical Babylon^b. And therefore as we are now assembled to look back with joy and gratitude on the late glorious victory it has pleased God to give the confederate arms against those of a great modern tyrant; so we may thence take occasion to look forward with hope for the like future success against all the enemies of God and his church, and to sing in concert with Deborah and the rest of the triumphing Israelites, *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might.*

In which words we may consider,

I. The grateful reflection that is made on the eminent victory God had lately given his church over their enemies, to which our text obviously refers. *So let all thy enemies perish, &c. i. e.* just so as the Canaanites perished in the late battle celebrated in this triumphant song.

II. The hopeful prospect that is hence taken of the success to be expected by the church on like occasions; the prophetic view of her future victories and triumphs. *Let thy enemies perish; or, thy enemies shall perish: but they that*

^b See Rev. chap. 17, and 18.

love him shall be as the sun when he goes forth in his might.

III. The humble ascription that is made to God of the victory already obtain'd, or whatsoever like advantages might be hereafter expected. For by the address that is made to God to execute the like vengeance on all the rest of his enemies, 'tis intimated that the overthrow of these Canaanites was owing to his divine hand; *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord.*

And lastly, I shall attempt to make some improvement of the whole, with reference to the occasion of our solemn thanksgiving this day.

First then, We are to take notice of the grateful reflection made by the pious Deborah and Barak, and the rest of the thankful Israelites, on the great victory God had given them over their enemies; which was so great, that they mention it as a model and pattern by which they desire and hope he would proceed against all his enemies, or, which is the same thing, the enemies of his church in ages to come.

If we read this and the foregoing chapter, we shall find the Israelites were in a miserable condition. Jabin king of Canaan had actually enslaved this free people. They who had lived under the benign influence of a theocracy, being subject to no other king
than

than God himself, were forced to yield their necks to the uneasy yoke of a heathen tyrant, who mightily oppressed them, and that for twenty years togetherⁱ; for *their rock had sold them*^k, as Moses had long since predicted. *They did evil in the sight of the Lord — and the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan*^l; i. e. God by his providence delivered them into the hands of this tyrant, and permitted him to treat them as slaves who are sold for money. The great oppression they groaned under is elegantly described in this song of Deborah: *In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael the high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked thro' by-ways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased in Israel, until I Deborah arose, till I arose a mother in Israel. They chose new gods, then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel*^m? — *They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord*ⁿ. It seems they were continually liable to the excursions and insults of the Canaanites, who ravag'd and spoil'd their possessions; so that they could not step abroad without running the risk of falling into their cruel hands. War, and the fatal train of miseries that attended

ⁱ Chap. 4. ver. 3.^k Deut. 32. 30.^l Judges 4. 1, 2.^m Ver. 6, 7, 8.ⁿ Ver. 11.

the conquests their enemies had made, had depopulated the villages of that fertile country, had stopp'd the course of their commerce, had render'd their publick roads desolate, and carry'd terror into the very gates of their fortified places. Multitudes of Israelites were intirely disarm'd; and that warlike people, whose distant fame, when they came out of Egypt *made the inhabitants of Palestine tremble*^o, were now become so weak and defenseless, that scarce a sword or shield was to be found among 40000 of them. Nor could they go out to draw water for themselves or cattle without the peril of their lives, being constantly infested with the tumultuous noise of archers that lay in wait to oppose them.

This misery was the less tolerable to all who had any sense of religion and honour, in that they were abandoned to the fury of a heathen prince of one of those nations that had been conquered by their ancestors, and made to serve under tribute^p; and whom, by a supine negligence, added to the rest of their sins and follies, they had suffered to grow to this exorbitant power: so that the people they had formerly subdued, were now become *snare and traps* to them, *scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes*^q, as Joshua had foretold them. The Canaanites who formerly served them, were now become their masters; they who were once tributary

• Exod. 15. 14.

p Josh. 17. 13.

q Josh. 23. 13.

to them, were now their insolent governors. The worshippers of idols trampled on the people, who were introduced into this country by the *mighty hand and out-stretched arm* of the *living God*; who made way for them by a long train of miraculous successes, subduing all that opposed them *by his sword and by his bow*.

Under these unhappy circumstances, there was, humanly speaking, no appearance of regaining their liberty: for what could be expected from a people whose spirits had been long enfeebled and dejected by a tedious state of servitude, and who were moreover naked and defenseless, against a powerful monarch, who had a very numerous army and nine hundred chariots of iron in the field? An army that had been so flesh'd with repeated victories, and so us'd to success, that the mother of Sisera their general, as well as the rest of the ladies of king Jabin's court, could by no means entertain a thought that they had fail'd in their present expedition, while yet they could not but wonder at their unusual stay in the field. They knew not how to imagine, that the Israelites could ever have assembled troops enough to make head against them, or could have been furnished with arms and inspired with courage sufficient to defeat an army, so great and so well appointed as that under the command of Sisera; and are therefore well described in this excellent song to have expressed themselves

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selves after the following manner: *The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried thro' the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, yea she returned answer to herself; Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey? to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?*

The troops of Jabin were the more formidable, in that they appear to have been joined by some other princes of Canaan. *The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo*[†]. These kings were confederate with Jabin, and perhaps tributary to him: for he reigned in Hazor[‡], which *was the head of many kingdoms*[‡]; and a prince of the same name was king of Hazor, and assembled divers other princes together to oppose Joshua when he invaded Canaan, and received an overthrow as fatal by his hand, as this monarch, with whom our text is concerned, did from the hands of Deborah and Barak.

Nay, some of the tribes of Israel, whether thro' despair of ever recovering their antient liberty, or a servile fear of aggravating their bondage, or a stupid neglect of their own true interest, or a spirit of faction, and unreasonable disaffection to the good government

[‡] Ver. 28, 29, 30.

[†] Ver. 19.

[‡] Chap. 4. 2.

[†] Josh. 11. 10.

and

and wise conduct of Deborah, declined the necessary service of that memorable day, and gave the prophets just reason in the midst of her triumph to upbraid them with the loss of so glorious an occasion of signalizing their valour, and of testifying their affection to their country. — *For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches* ^v.

And that which added a very great weight to all the other discouragements under which this miserable people laboured, was the greatness of their sin, in having abandoned the service of the true God. They cried to him indeed when they were in distress, but their frequent revolts shew that their prayers and tears often proceeded rather from the sense of their sufferings, than that of their sins. Was it likely that that God who had been so often provoked by them and their fathers, who returned as constantly to their former transgressions as he repeated his wonted favours, would now again deliver them? Might they not justly expect that he would now be as deaf to their prayers, as they had before been to his commands? Yet so gracious and indulgent was the great God to this perverse

^v Ver. 15, 16, 17.

and ungrateful people who had dealt treacherously with him, by violating his covenant and forsaking his worship, that when they seemed in the least sensible of their iniquity and folly, he heard their supplication, and wrought deliverance for them. And tho it appears not from the context that there was so great and general a reformation among them, as might have been expected, both from the sacred authority and shining example of that great prophets, who then judged the tribes of Israel; yet God was pleased to crown her government with a glorious victory, as a reward to her extraordinary zeal, and a return to the fervent prayers of those pious Israelites, who *sigh'd for the abominations that had been committed*, and used their utmost endeavours to reform the manners of the people.

A victory to a nation under so great oppression, and living in fear of being loaded with yet heavier chains, was a kind of resurrection. The revival of the glorious cause of their religion and liberty, that seemed to be expiring together, furnished an occasion of joy and thanksgiving fit to be celebrated by the tongue and pen of that prophets, who had, under God, the chief hand in the work, and the principal share in the honour of that happy day, which at once brought destruction on the forces of Jabin, and returned liberty and peace to the tribes of Israel.

A victory very glorious to Deborah and Barak, in that at the head of ten thousand Israelites they gave an intire defeat to an army much superior in number. *And Deborah said to Barak, Up, for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thy hand: Is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him; and the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak: so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots and after the host to Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell on the edge of the sword, and there was not a man left^u.*

All things concurred to give the Canaanites a mortal blow. *They fought from heaven, says the prophetess, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera^w.* Some interpreters think thunder and lightning, with great showers of rain or hail, which God is said to reserve against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war^x, were sent from heaven to the assistance of the Israelites. Others suppose that expression denotes that the stars contributed to compleat the victory, in furnishing light to the troops of Israel to pursue the routed enemy. 'Tis the opinion of others, that it relates to the ministry of angels, who

^u Chap. 4. 14, 15, 16.

^w Chap. 5. 20.

^x Job 38. 22, 23, &c.

are called stars in the book of Job^y, and have been often employed to execute the divine justice on the enemies of the church. And others imagine it to be a poetical allusion, representing the higher ground from which the Israelites fought, the good order and discipline observed among them, and the courage and resolution with which they maintained their ground and beat the enemy from his: so that they seemed to fight from heaven, and appeared regular in all their motions, like the stars in their course.

Those of the enemy who were not overtaken by the sword were driven into the river Kishon; and their horse were as intirely broken and destroyed as their foot, as appears by Deborah's song: *The river Kishon swept them away, that antient river the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength. Then were the horse-hoofs broken by means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones^z.*

This action was the more memorable, in that it was first concerted and afterwards carried on by the prudent management and good conduct of a woman. It was Deborah who sent Barak on this glorious expedition^a, and roused the courage of the people to make a brave attempt to shake off the servile yoke that had so long gall'd them, to vindicate their antient rights, and recover their

^y Job 28. 7.

^z Judges 5. 21, 22.

^a See chap. 4.

lost honour. And as Sisera, the general of king Jabin's troops, ingloriously fled from the sword of one woman, the divine providence so ordered it that he should fall into the hands of another ; and instead of dying in the bed of honour, he fell by no other weapon than a nail driven thro' his temples with a hammer.

So vain was the confident expectation of victory in Sisera's mother, and the other court-ladies who flatter'd her empty hopes, when the great God thought fit to confound their pride and stain their glory, to make the world know that *there is no king saved by the multitude of a host : a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. A horse is a vain thing for safety ; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.* But that, *The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy*^b.

To conclude this head : The consequence of this wonderful victory was not only the re-establishment of the liberty of the Israelites, but the dissipation of all their fears ; the enemy being overthrown beyond a possibility of rallying again. And as a peace of forty years ensued upon it, so at the expiration of that time, when their sins provoked God again to send them a scourge, it was by another hand that he chastised them^c. So that this battel at the river Kishon proved a decisive stroke in favour of Israel ; and happy

^b Psal. 33. 16, 17, 18.

| ^c Chap. 6. 1, 2.

had that people been, if they had constantly adhered to the service of their God, who so often made their enemies fly and fall before them.

Having given some account of the victory to which our text refers, we are to consider,

II. The hopeful prospect that is hence taken of the future victories to be expected by the church on like occasions; *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord*: q. d. "However
 " numerous and powerful those armies are
 " that are employed to oppress and persecute
 " thy people; how much soever those who
 " employ them glory in their own strength
 " and policy, and assure themselves of new
 " conquests and repeated triumphs; scatter
 " their numbers, break their arm of flesh,
 " confound their counsels, blast their designs, and disappoint their hopes."

If here arise a doubt in the mind of any person, whether such a prayer as this, tho used by the Israelitish church, is suitable to the mild and forgiving temper of the evangelick administration, by which we are taught to *love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us*^d; I desire it may be considered, that,

As the words of our text were dictated by the holy Spirit, who guided the prophets

^d Mat. 5. 44.

in the composition of her song of praise ; they can't be inconsistent with the words of our Saviour, who had the tongue of the learned given him by the same Spirit. Some indeed have imagined, that under the dispensation of the old testament a much greater liberty was taken by holy men to invoke the divine vengeance against their enemies, than is allowed under the new ; the christian religion being peculiarly eminent for that meekness and charity, wherewith it inspires its votaries. But since these are moral virtues, by whatever new motives the doctrine of the gospel recommends the practice of them, the nature of them was ever the same ; and as they are to be referred to the second table of the moral law, they necessarily bound the consciences of those who lived under the old testament, as well as of those who live under the new. Nor is it to be supposed that the Spirit of God, who inspired so many prayers against the enemies of the church, as are to be found in the book of Psalms, and other parts of the divine writings, would have indulged in the prophets an uncharitable and malicious frame of mind, which is utterly inconsistent with the precepts of the moral law.

'Tis true, we ought never to pray for the eternal destruction of those who hate us, but on the contrary, that they may be saved from the wrath to come. And if we find in the holy scripture some imprecations that seem

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to aim at the everlasting ruin of the persons against whom they are uttered, as those against Judas, and some other enemies of God and his church, in the 69th Psalm and elsewhere ; these are rather to be considered as predictions of their everlasting misery, than prayers that they might be for ever miserable : and none ought to use the like against any, till they make it appear that the spirit of prophecy has plainly mark'd them out, and devoted them to perdition.

Nor ought we absolutely to desire and pray for the temporal ruin of the enemies of the church in general, or those of the nation in which we dwell, but only conditionally, if the rules of the divine law, and provision for the common safety, make it necessary. We are even to desire their preservation, if it may be consistent with justice and the publick good : yet this hinders not but we may pray, that if they persist in their injustice and malignity, and are to be reduced by no milder method, they may rather fall into that ruin they have prepared for others, than prosper in their unjust and cruel designs against the innocent.

If a controversy between different princes and states arise to that height that it can't be decided but by force, and a people must either sacrifice all that's dear to them to the boundless ambition of a tyrant, or betake themselves to arms to assert their rights, and seek to preserve themselves by the slaughter

of their enemies ; reason, and the law of nature, the common principle of self-preservation, and the law of nations, the love of justice, and the safety of the innocent, all justify those prayers which invoke the exertion of the arm of God to vindicate so good a cause, by the preservation of the righteous, and overthrow of the wicked. And the holy scripture gives us innumerable instances of petitions of this kind, and of the approbation they have received from heaven, by the signal victories that have been given in answer to them.

For there is a very great difference between personal controversies and those of large communities or whole nations. It becomes a private man to pass by offences, to forgive injuries, to pray for his enemies, and render them good offices for their ill treatment of him ; because this may not only consist with, but very much conduce to his own safety, honour and advantage, and the welfare of the community wherein he lives : and when these suffer or are in danger, he may appeal to the magistrate who is God's vicegerent, and seek the decision of the quarrel at the hand of publick justice. But when nations contend, and have no judge on earth to whom they can agree to refer their cause, they, by taking up arms, make an appeal to God the sovereign judge of the universe, and refer their quarrel to the decision of his providence. And when the ruin of one or the other army
must

must determine the controversy, nothing can be more evident, than that those who are engaged in a righteous cause may pray for their own success; which implies the defeat of their enemies, because this is now become necessary to their own preservation.

I might add, that the enemies of the church in the text are called the enemies of God, these being convertible terms; and consequently those who love God's honour and interest, may very safely pray that his enemies may be disappointed and subdued.

In short, the practice of the church of God in all ages furnishes precedents for such prayers; the promises in the prophetick writings both of the old and new testament give encouragement to them; and whatsoever might be said in vindication of a just war, may be fairly alledged to justify them. For when war becomes a lawful undertaking, we may warrantably pray for success in it; that is, for the overthrow of our enemies; unless any one will maintain, that it is unwarrantable to pray for success in a lawful undertaking.

But I proceed to the other part of Deborah's prayer in the text. Having prayed against the enemies of God and of his church, she adds a petition for the prosperity of the righteous: *But let them that love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might.*

They may well be said to love God, who love his honour, his truth and cause; who love the peace and prosperity of his church, and who expose themselves to labour and fatigue, to difficulties and dangers for her sake. 'Tis not unlikely that this character was primarily designed for the officers and troops of Israel, who had so bravely conquered the formidable army of the Canaanites; and whom the prophetess mentions with so much honour in other parts of her song. *My heart, says she, is towards the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people: bless ye the Lord^c. Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek; after thee Benjamin among thy people: out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer^f. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopard'd their lives unto the death in the high places of the field^g.* But this request may be commodiously extended farther, and referred to them who should love God in all succeeding ages; and may be thus paraphrased: "Let all those generous governors, all those brave officers and troops of volunteers who have shared in the glory of this expedition, and all those who shall have the like zeal for God, and the same love to the interest of his church in future times, prosper in their honourable attempts

^c Judges 5. 2.

^f Ver. 14.

^g Ver. 18.

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“ for the common benefit : let them arise
“ like the sun out of their obscurity, and
“ still increase in strength and honour.
“ And as that glorious luminary chases away
“ all the horror and darkness of the night,
“ and dissipates the clouds and mists that
“ surround him in the morning, so let them
“ speedily and intirely scatter all the force of
“ their enemies. As the sun comes like a
“ *bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoices*
“ *as a strong man to run a race : his going*
“ *forth is from the end of the heaven, and his*
“ *circuit unto the ends of it ; and there is no-*
“ *thing hid from the heat thereof*^h : let their
“ generous actions in like manner spread their
“ fame thro’ the universe ; let their honour
“ be as extensive as their influence ; let every
“ part of the world, that feels the benefit of
“ the great things they have performed, have
“ an agreeable view of the glory they have
“ acquired.”

And I may add, what was intimated before, that these words may be commodiously interpreted as a prophecy of the happy state of the church in the latter days, with the promises whereof the scripture abounds, and often describes it with the like metaphorical expressions. In this view the prophet Isaiah addresses himself to the church in these terms: *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*ⁱ. And as she is described in the song of Solomon to be *fair*

^h Psal. 12. 5.

| ⁱ Isa. 60. 1.

as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners^k; so she was represented to the apostle John as a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet^l, &c. to denote her beauty, and the glory with which she should be adorn'd.

But I proceed to the third thing observed in the text, *viz.*

III. The humble ascription that is made to the Almighty of the victory obtain'd, as well as a dependance on the same mercy and power for the like advantages to be hereafter expected; express'd in this prophetick petition, *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord, &c.*

While the church prays that all God's enemies may perish like the forces of Jabin, she owns that the decision of battles belongs to the Lord of hosts, and that the victory obtained over the Canaanites, was owing to the God of Israel. This truth is often acknowledged in the divine writings, and is often very elegantly expressed by the psalmist: *For who is God, says he, save the Lord; or who is a rock, save our God? It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like hinds feet, and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation, and thy right hand has holden me up, and thy gentleness has made me*

^k Cant. 6. 10.

| ^l Rev. 12. 1.

great.

great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise; they are fallen under my feet. For thou hast girded me with strength unto battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me: Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me ^m, &c. We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the Lord fulfil all thy petitions. Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed: he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand ⁿ. In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Sion. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah ^o. The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. Thou, even thou art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry ^p? &c.

The name of Lord of hosts, so often used in scripture, signifies not only that all the host of heaven, all the legions of angels are under the divine government; but also that all the

^m Psal. 18. 31—40.

ⁿ Psal. 20. 5, 6.

^o Psal. 76. 1, 2, 3.

^p Ver. 5, 6, 7.

armies of men are at the disposal of God, and over-rul'd to subserve his designs and accomplish his pleasure.

He gives princes, statesmen, and generals, presence of mind, or confounds their thoughts; he directs them to take right methods, or infatuates them; he renders their projects prosperous, or disconcerts and breaks their measures; he gives courage to their armies, or dispirits them: he sometimes augments the resolution and valour of those whom he designs to render victorious; so that on that account they vastly surpass their enemies, and even exceed themselves, and are made to accomplish that which on other occasions themselves would think imprudent to attempt. Thus, to use the prophet's phrase, *The feeble become like David, and the house of David like the angel of the Lord*⁹. *With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth away counsellors spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bonds of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the*

⁹ Zech. 12, 8.

nations, and straitneth them again. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man^r.

Every one who is conversant in the holy scriptures, knows that nothing has been more constantly attributed to God, than the advantages his people have obtained over their enemies; and that many psalms of praise have been composed on such occasions. *In his name* they were wont to *set up their banners*, and to his arm they used to ascribe all their victories.

Nor does this hinder the obligation all good men are under, of making a grateful acknowledgment to the persons whom the providence of God has employed for their defence or deliverance. As God himself has declared that *he will honour those who honour him^r*; so he requires us to give *honour to whom honour is due^s*. Common justice and gratitude engage us to be thankful to our benefactors; and this obligation increases in proportion to the extent and value of the benefits we receive by their means, and to the difficulties and perils to which they have generously exposed themselves in procuring them: of which former ages were so sensible, that many nations have been much

^r Job 12. 16—25.

^s 1 Sam. 2. 30.

| ^s Rom. 13. 7.

more prone to exceed due bounds in the honours they have done their heroes, both while living and when dead, than to be deficient therein. Tho, I confess, we live in an age and nation wherein some have not scrupled to practise the reverse of this, and have been so unjust to the name of a prince, to whom, under God, they owe the restoration of their civil, and preservation of their religious liberties, as to refuse that honour to his memory, which his less partial enemies abroad think reasonable to allow him.

The song of Deborah gives the principal glory of the victory it celebrates to the great God, to whom *salvation and victory* belong; and at the same time forgets not to give just applause to the officers and troops that acquired it under the divine conduct. *Praise ye the Lord*, says she, *for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves: Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I will sing to the Lord, I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel^t. My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the Lord^u. Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam. Then he made him that remaineth, have dominion over the nobles among the*

^t Judges 5. 2, 3.

| ^u Ver. 9.

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people : the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty v.

And nothing can be more certainly concluded, than that it is the duty of those to whom God has given victory over cruel enemies, to depend for the future on the same divine arm that has already made them conquerors ; and *that they that know his name should put their trust in him, seeing he has not forsaken them that seek him* w.

But 'tis time we should come to the improvement of what has been said, with a particular reference to the solemn occasion of our assembling this day.

It becomes us to imitate the zeal of Deborah and Barak, and the joyful tribes of Israel, in looking back on the late victory it has pleased God to give her majesty's troops, and those of her allies, over the arms of France ; to excite us to the duty of praise and thanksgiving, to which we have had so loud a call by the providence of God, as well as by her majesty's pious proclamation.

We may also hence take occasion with the same Israelites to look forward with hope, and to pray for, I had almost said presage, the like glorious acts of providence in favour of the righteous cause in which this nation, with some other states, is engaged against the most dangerous tyrant and greatest persecutor of the age ; and to give the Almighty the

v Ver. 12, 13.

| w Psal. 9. 10.

glory due to his name, by confiding in his mercy and power for future victories, since our hope is encouraged by one so eminent as that which we now joyfully commemorate : the circumstances of which were not altogether unlike that which is celebrated in the song of triumph which our text concludes.

'Tis true, we have not been enslaved to France, we have not felt what it is to be oppressed, as the Israelites were under the yoke of Jabin. We were in the possession of our liberty and religion, when God was pleased to give us the late victory. His providence has given us a commodious situation in the midst of the seas ; which has been a mean to preserve us even from many of the calamities of war, that are unavoidable to our neighbours and allies on the continent. But every considering man will acknowledge, that the danger that both formerly and of late has threatened us, of being insulted by that great oppressor, who pretends to give laws and kings to so many nations, has not been contemptible. That he has been many years endeavouring to grasp all the territories of Europe, and subjugate them to his arbitrary power, has appeared by the management of his councils, and the operations of his forces : and there are but too many sad instances of his success in some foreign countries, into which he has carried fire and sword, and by those instruments of cruelty established his despotick government. The yoke has been

no less heavy which he has imposed on multitudes of his own subjects. I presume you are not ignorant with what unparallel'd barbarity he has persecuted the protestants in France, as well as those in Piedmont and the principality of Orange : what great numbers have suffered death by variety of exquisite torments ! how many have been condemned to the slavery of the gallies, or that of the American plantations ! and how many have been exposed to the difficulties of flight, and the poverty and hardship attending a state of exile in foreign countries !

Prudence, and the care of our own welfare, deeply interest us in all the miseries that befall our allies ; and humanity teaches us to pity all that are oppressed. But we owe the members of our Saviour's mystical body a sympathy so tender, as to make us resent their sorrows and sufferings as our own : and therefore what they have felt as well as what we have feared, their afflictions as well as our own dangers, shew us what cause we have to bless God for the late mortification the common enemy has received.

The many crying sins of this nation, and the great aggravation of its guilt in so long refusing to be reformed, notwithstanding all the pious and charitable attempts that have been made to that purpose by persons of all ranks and degrees among us ; the abuse of so many days of solemn humiliation, wherein too many have *drawn nigh to God only with*

their mouths, and honoured him with their lips, while their hearts have been far from him, increased the fears of many good men, and made their hearts tremble, like Eli's, for the ark of God; lest our rock should sell us into the hands of our enemies as a people incorrigible by all indulgent methods, and make us serve a people that were not able to stand before our ancestors, nor had been so formidable in this age, if the weakness and treachery of those who should have provided for the common safety in some former reigns, had not favoured their ambitious designs, by conniving at their unreasonable quarrels with their neighbours, by tamely looking on their many unjust incroachments, and by contributing to the vast increase of their naval force.

And notwithstanding the frequent checks the French king received by the prudent counsels, indefatigable industry, and victorious arms of the late king William of glorious memory; yet the respite he obtained by the peace he found himself obliged to seek at the hand of this prince, was improved by him in recruiting his strength, and in making preparation for the expected death of the late king of Spain, upon whose exit he did not want a pretence to get Spain itself, and the greatest part of the dominions belonging to that monarchy, immediately under his power. Divers places in the Low-Countries that had been regained from him
and

and defended against him in the former war, at the expence of so much blood and treasure, fell at once into his hands ; and the immense riches of the West-Indian mines became an easy prey to him.

While all Europe was in a consternation, and trembled at the event of this great revolution, and divers princes and states found themselves under a necessity to arm against the mischiefs that deeply affected some of them, and threatned the rest ; France employed her interest and artifice with so much success, as to engage several of them to espouse her quarrel, and to amuse others into a neutrality, notwithstanding the evidence of the common danger.

With these advantages the French king began the present war, and before the late defeat of his troops near Hochstet, had made very great advances in Germany by the assistance of the elector of Bavaria : a prince, who, after the example of his brother the elector of Cologne, has thought fit to sacrifice his own honour and authority, as well as the blood of his subjects and peace of his country, to the humour of a tyrant, and to have the satisfaction of lending his assistance to enslave Europe, for whose liberty he formerly appeared in the field ; as if he now thought it more eligible to be a vassal of France than a sovereign prince, and more honourable to draw his sword against the common liberty than in the defence of it.

The consternation, weakness, and divisions of the empire, the success of the French in obliging the imperialists to abandon Italy, the difficulties under which the duke of Savoy laboured, the unaccountable confusions of Poland, and the doubtful situation of the affairs of Portugal, together with the untoward factions and discontents that fermented the Scottish nation, as well as the disaffection of too many in this kingdom, who, by their frowardness and uneasiness under the present government, make it appear that they wish not so well to the protestant interest as they ought to do ; all these things gave us but a melancholy prospect of affairs before the late battle.

The forces of the enemy were superior in number to those of the allies : they were the flower and pride of the French troops, that had all the advantages of discipline and experience ; many of them were veterans, led on by a more than common number of good officers, long inured to the hardships, and well acquainted with the stratagems of war, under the conduct of a general of a growing reputation. They had the advantage of the ground, and were big with the hope of a compleat victory, and of the large spoil and new honours that would attend it.

If, at this critical juncture, God had thought fit *to deal with us according to our sins, and to reward us after our iniquities*, what a dismal scene might we now have had
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in view ! If victory had been on our enemies side, and given them an opportunity of cutting off the retreat of our troops, and of surrounding them in a place so very distant from their native country, the slaughter of them might have been as great ; and their overthrow as fatal as that of the French has proved. Our sorrow and fear might have been equal to our present joy and hope. We might have been this day the scorn and triumph of those who hate us ; and instead of wearing the *garments of praise*, might have been clothed with the *spirit of heaviness*. But God has spoken to us by his providence, as he did formerly to the Jews by his prophets : *For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off—*
For my own sake, even for my own sake will I do it ; for how should my name be polluted ? and I will not give my glory to another ^x.

The French were very confident of success ; but to their confidence the confederate army opposed their solemn prayers, to engage the Almighty on their side, and seem to have encountered their enemies with a courage like that with which king Hezekiah inspired the Jewish captains, against the powerful army of the king of Assyria, when he said, *Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him. With him*

^x Isa. 48. 9, 11.

is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles^y. And we may now say, *The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations*^z; and has given us a victory that has no parallel in the present age, and all things considered, there are few examples in history which can equal it, excepting those miraculous instances among the Israelites in the time of the judges. Our enemies have not only been conquered, but cut off in prodigious numbers; many squadrons which escaped the edge of the sword, were precipitated into the Danube, and drowned therein, as the Canaanites were in the river Kishon, and the Egyptians before in the Red-Sea, and a great number of battalions made prisoners of war: so that a numerous and well-disciplin'd army was not only routed, but in a manner totally ruin'd.

Some considerable victories have been obtained without any great slaughter of men; when many have been slain, the body of the army has been often saved by a prudent retreat; when they have been put to a disorderly flight, great numbers have commonly escaped, and soon made a formidable appearance again. But on this occasion all things concurred to the almost intire destruction of the French troops, which is a very surprising event, in an age and in an army wherein the art of war has been so

^y 2 Chron. 32. 7, 8.

| ^z Isa. 52. 10.

much refined, and advanced to so high a perfection. In former ages men generally fought with abundantly more courage than skill, and seemed more careful to employ what art they had in destroying their enemies than in preserving themselves; and consequently the slaughter on both sides was usually great. But modern armies are no less skilful in the defensive than in the offensive part of war, and are not wont to engage, without first taking all necessary precautions to secure to themselves a good retreat, in case they should fail of success: and the French, of all others, have been remarked for their prudence and care on this account. But whether a dependance on the number, experience, and courage of their troops, and a confident expectation of coming off conquerors, removed all apprehension of danger from the minds of their generals, or whatsoever else was the cause of their infatuation, they so ordered the matter, that when their army was broken, a great part of it was so inclosed by the confederate forces, that it was impossible for them to escape; and many others found no other way of retreat than that of throwing themselves into the Danube, leaving their camp and the spoils of it to their conquerors.

And that which ought to endear to us the memory of this action, and to give a peculiar accent to our thanksgiving, is, that the forces of the protestant princes and states,

and more especially the English troops, had the far greatest share in it, and consequently of the honour that attends it.

The destruction of so many of the French king's bravest troops, which he had so often reviewed with pleasure, as the hopeful instruments of his cruel ambition, and whose former successes had been celebrated by the wit and eloquence of so many flattering tongues and pens, must needs give a strange uneasiness to the mind of that haughty monarch; while we adore the divine providence that has abased the glory of his high looks, broken the arm of flesh on which he leaned, and swept away many of those troops from the face of the earth, which he had employed to extirpate the protestant religion out of France.

The signal preservation of the English general, who was exposed to imminent danger in this battle, and the taking of the French general prisoner, with divers other general officers, besides those who fell by the sword, all add to the splendor of that memorable day; which would have been less bright and joyful, if mareschal Tallard had made his escape, and the duke of Marlborough had been slain.

As the victory itself was very great, so are the consequences of it likely to be, some of which already begin to appear. What immediate relief has it given to Germany? what life to the common cause of Europe?
what

what strength to the confederacy? what vigor to the spirits of the people in this and divers foreign nations? And we may reasonably hope for yet greater things, if the great God will continue to *go out with our armies*: and not only this age, but ages to come will reap the advantage, as well as keep up the memory of this never-to-be-forgotten victory. For,

2. We may hence take encouragement after the example of the Israelites in our text, to hope and pray for the like eminent displays of the divine justice and mercy hereafter. *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might.* What God has already wrought for his church, seems a hopeful earnest and pledge of yet greater things which he designs in her favour: and as we have had occasion for many days of humiliation and prayer, let us hope for as many seasons of joy and thanksgiving. Let us pray that those who attempt to banish liberty, peace, and the true religion from the earth, may see their pernicious designs prove abortive; and that the forces they unjustly employ to execute such wicked purposes, may become as *dust to the swords, and as driven stubble to the bows*^a of those who favour the cause of truth and justice: that those princes, who neither fear God nor regard man, but break all civil and sacred

^a Isa. 41. 2.

bonds asunder at their pleasure, that will be governed by no principles either of honour or conscience, but perfidiously violate the most solemn treaties and oaths to gratify their insatiable desire of dominion, may never be able to compass their designs, but that the righteous judgment of God may be eminently revealed, in punishing their impiety, injustice, and treachery: that those who have made themselves rich with the spoils, and drunk with the blood, not only of their innocent subjects and neighbours, but of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, may have blood given them to drink, *because they are worthy*, while they persist in those inhuman practices: that as God, when he had destroyed Pharaoh and his army in the mighty waters of the Red-sea, gave repeated victories to his church till he had settled them in the land he had promised them; so he may pursue those enemies whom he has lately conquered, till he has made his church a *quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down*^b: that all those antichristian persecutors, who are not willing Christ should reign so much as in the hearts of his people, may be made to feel the weight of his *rod of iron*^c, if they will not bow to the scepter of his mercy: that the protestant interest may flourish and prosper, and those of the reform'd religion in France, who have long hazarded their lives in the defence of that and their civil

^b Isa. 33. 20.| ^c Psal. 2. 9.

liberty,

liberty, may be effectually delivered from the hands of their enemies, to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of their lives^d. It becomes us to sympathize with them in their afflictions in the midst of our triumphs, and by no means to forget Jerusalem, but to prefer her prosperity above our chief joy^e: and we ought to pray, that all who love her, and seek her good, may prosper; that they may increase in vigor and lustre like the sun, when he goes out in his might. Let us pray that a series of victories and triumphs may attend the reign of queen Anne, till her and our enemies are brought to reason, and that we may long enjoy the advantages we possess under the influence of her happy government. Let us contribute what we can to the support of it, and to the success of her arms, at least by our constant and fervent prayers; for there is no law to restrain any of us from rendering service to her majesty and to our native country after this pious manner.

Lastly, Let us give God the glory that is due to his name, for all that he has already done for us, and resolve on all like occasions to celebrate his praise. Let us imitate the gratitude of Moses and Israel; *I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my*

^d Luke 1. 75.

^e Psal. 137. 5, 6.

God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. Jehovah is a man of war: Jehovah is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red-sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy; and in the greatness of thy excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble^f. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders^g? &c. And elsewhere, I will publish, says Moses, the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness to our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he^h. Let us sing in the words of the psalmist, Let the righteous be glad, let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth

^f Exod. 15. 1—7.

^g Ver. 9, 10, 11.

^h Deut. 32. 3, 4.

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upon the heavens by his name Jah, and rejoice before himⁱ. The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil^k. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. He that is our God, is the God of salvation: and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses^l. Bless ye God, in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel^m. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for usⁿ. — Scatter thou the people that delight in war. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises unto the Lord. Selah^o. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he, that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God^p. And elsewhere: O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory^q.

But what shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? Wherewith shall we come before

ⁱ Psal. 68. 3, 4.

^k Ver. 11, 12.

^l Ver. 19, 20, 21.

^m Ver. 26.

ⁿ Ver. 26.

^o Ver. 30, 32.

^p Ver. 34, 35.

^q Psal 98. 1.

the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God? Shall we come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? No: tho the thanksgiving of his people was formerly expressed by these offerings, which are not required of us, since the oblation our Saviour made of himself once for all on the cross; yet God expected from them, and much more expects from us another kind of sacrifices: the sacrifice of praise, the calves of our lips[†]: sincere hearts and pure affections. Bless the Lord, says the psalmist, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits[‡]. A holy and regular conversation: He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God[†]? That we present our bodies, as well as souls, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service^ⁱ. That we forget not to do good and to communicate; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased^ⁱ. We are not to satisfy ourselves in laying aside our ordinary affairs, and in devoting some little time to the service of God, in appearing in his sanctuary, and expressing joy in our coun-

[‡] Mic. 6. 6, 7.

[†] Hof. 14. 2. Heb. 13. 15.

[‡] Psal. 103. 1, 2.

[†] Mic. 6. 8.

^ⁱ Rom. 12. 1.

^ⁱ Heb. 13. 16.

tenances,

tenances, in speaking and hearing of God's wonderful works, and in singing his praises with our tongues; but these ought to make a very deep and lasting impression on our minds, should endear the service of his temple to us, where he has so graciously heard our prayers, and thereby *compassed us about with songs of deliverance*^w. The reflections we make on the mighty works of God, which are justly *marvellous in our eyes*^x, should excite our love and exalt our devotion, confirm our faith and encourage our hope, and inspire us with holy resolutions of serving him with those lives, that liberty, and those estates which he has defended and secured, according to the precepts of that holy religion, the free exercise of which he has preserved to us. *Whoso offers praise, says God himself, glorifies me; and to him that orders his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God*^y.

And suffer me particularly to recommend to you the remembrance of the poor on this joyful occasion. When the Jews prevailed against their enemies, and solemnized the feast of Purim for a time of thanksgiving, as they sent *portions one to another, so they sent gifts to the poor*^z. If, on a day of fasting, we are required to *deal our bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out into our houses; when we see the naked, to cover*

^w Psal. 32. 7.^x Psal. 118. 23.^y Psal. 50. 23.^z Esth. 9. 22.

him,

him, and not to hide ourselves from our own flesh^a; to draw out our souls to the hungry, and to satisfy the afflicted soul^b; how reasonable is the exercise of this charity on a day of thanksgiving! a proper occasion of acknowledging God's mercy to us, in being merciful to those who bear his image. We have been inquiring what returns we shall make to the Lord our God: tho our goodness extends not to him, yet it ought to be diffused among the saints that are on earth^c; nay, we ought to do good to all men, tho especially to them that are of the household of faith^d. Our Saviour was pleased in the days of his flesh personally to receive the charity of his followers; now he is ascended into heaven he is above those necessities: yet he interprets what his people receive for his sake, as if taken by his own hand, and applied to his own use. *I was hungry, says he, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me^e. Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me^f.* Can there be a more fit occasion than this day of joy and triumph offers you, to distribute your bounty to refresh the bowels of the poor, that the bles-

^a Isa. 58. 7.

^b Ver. 10.

^c Psal. 16. 2.

^d Gal. 6. 10.

^e Mat. 25. 35, 36.

^f Ver. 40.

sing

sing of him that was ready to perish may come upon you; and that you may cause the widow's heart to sing for joy^g: for, to use the words of the apostle, the administration of this service not only supplies the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God^h.

Need I add any thing to excite you to praise the God of our mercies, after I have represented to you how much an unworthy and sinful nation has been the care of his providence, and how much we owe him for that important change he has made in the state of affairs in Europe, in favour of the protestant interest? The duty of thanksgiving is reasonable, necessary, and pleasant; 'tis the business and pleasure of the highest order of rational creatures, the *holy angels that always behold the face of our heavenly fatherⁱ*. We cannot neglect this duty without contracting the guilt of the blackest ingratitude, and incurring the displeasure of a jealous God. As his temple is called the house of prayer, so it is termed *the praises of Israel^k*, to shew that praise is an essential part of his worship as well as prayer. 'Tis an ease and pleasure to a grateful mind, to acknowledge the obligations which it can never discharge. 'Tis very acceptable to God, as well as agreeable to every ingenuous soul: and on that account we may apply to

^g Job 29. 13.

^h 2 Cor. 9. 12.

ⁱ Mat. 18. 10.

^k Psal. 22. 3.

it what Jotham in his parable says of the fruit of the vine, that it *cheers both God and man*¹. 'Tis a pleasing sacrifice to him, and a pleasant duty to all that sincerely perform it: *Praise ye the Lord*, says the psalmist, *for it is good to sing praises unto our God, for it is pleasant; and praise is comely*^m. But we must always remember, that our lives are to praise him as well as our lips: and if his *goodness* has that influence upon us, as effectually to *lead us to repentance*ⁿ, we shall be secure of the divine favour, and have more of these occasions to *enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise*^o. For who shall *harm us*, if we be followers of that which is good^p? And if God be for us, who can be against us? If he arise, his enemies will be scattered; and those that hate him shall flee before him^q.

¹ Judg. 9. 13.^m Psal. 147. 1.ⁿ Rom. 2. 4.^o Psal. 100. 4.^p 1 Pet. 3. 13.^q Psal. 68. 1.

A sermon preach'd on *Thursday* the 27th of *June*, 1706. being the day appointed by her majesty for a solemn thanksgiving to almighty God for the late glorious progress of her majesty's arms, and those of her allies, in *Flanders* and *Spain*.

S E R M O N VI.

Deut. xxxiii. 29.

Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord! the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.



WHEN Moses the law-giver and judge of Israel, and the greatest prophet under the old testament, was admonish'd of his approaching death; the very day he receives an order from heaven to ascend mount Nebo and die there, he takes his solemn

leave of that people, whom he had brought out of Egypt, and conducted thro' the wilderness to the borders of Canaan^r: and this he does first by a prophetick song in the foregoing chapter, which contains an account of the great blessings God would bestow on them in case of their obedience to his commands, and of the terrible judgments that would pursue them, if they should revolt from the true religion; and then by pronouncing particular blessings on the several tribes of Israel in this chapter, which he concludes with a general blessing on the whole nation.

'Tis true, the name of Simeon is not here mentioned among the rest of the tribes, who are distinguished by the names of their fathers; but some Greek copies of the Septuagint make the tribe of Simeon, who was next in order of birth to Reuben, share with his posterity the blessing contained in the 6th verse, which they thus render: *Let Reuben live, and not die; and let Simeon be many in number*: tho some interpreters are better pleased with the Targum of Jonathan, which finds a place for Simeon in the blessing of Judah; because when the land of promise came to be divided, the sacred text says, *their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah*^r: and therefore the expeditions made by this tribe against the Ca-

^r Chap. 32. 48, 49.

| ^r Josh. 19. 1.

naanites,

naanites, were in concert with the tribe of Simeon ^s.

But whatever difficulty there may seem in assigning them a distinct blessing in this chapter, there is no room to doubt of their interest in that general and comprehensive one which closes it.

As it was the usual practice of the antient patriarchs to bless their children a little before their death, as appears in the instance of Isaac, who, when he was dim with age, and in the daily expectation of death, pronounced a blessing on his two sons ^t; and of Jacob, who, *by faith when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph*, and then all his own sons, who were the heads of the tribes of Israel ^u; so Moses, who was king in Jeshurun ^v, as the common father of this people, piously recommends them to the care of heaven, and predicts the great favours and privileges with which God design'd to honour them, as the beginning of the chapter assures us: *And this is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death* ^w.

After the particular blessings pronounced on the different tribes, he foretels the prosperity of the whole body of that people, who were under the special protection of the true God whom they worshipped, and going to

^s Judg. 1. 3.

^t Gen. 27.

^u Heb. 11. 21. Gen. 48, and

chap. 49.

^v Deut. 33. 5.

^w Ver. 1.

be introduced by his power into the possession of a very pleasant and fruitful country, The terms he uses on this occasion are very lofty, and express a very sensible pleasure in the mind of him who uttered them: *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven for thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew^x.*

And now the review he takes of the great things God had already done for them, together with the prospect he has of the new miracles the Almighty was about to perform in their favour, throws him into a transport of joy and wonder, and makes him celebrate their happiness after a very elegant manner in our text: *Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord! the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.*

In which words the prophet,

1st, Admires the happy state of the Israelites above all other nations; *Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee!*

2^d Ver. 26, 27, 28.

2dly, Declares wherein their happiness consisted, viz. in the favour of God, by whom they were defended from their enemies, and made to triumph over them; which is expressed in these terms: *O people, saved by the Lord! the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thy enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.*

1. As to the terms in which Moses admires the peculiar happiness of Israel, they have a great deal of force in them in the original. The word here translated *happy*, is the same that is frequently used by the psalmist, to signify the great happiness that attends a religious course of life: *Blessed is the man*, says he, *who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly*^y, &c. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they who keep his testimonies*^z. *Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord*². In all which places the word *blessed* might be rendered the blessedness or happiness, or, if our language would bear it, happinesses, according to the Hebrew idiom; and imports as much as when we say in English, *O the happiness of a pious man! O the many blessings that accompany the exercise of holiness and religion!* The same emphasis is in our text, where the same word is employed: *Happy art thou, O Israel!* or

^y Psal. 1. 1.

² Psal. 128. 1.

^z Psal. 119. 1, 2.

thy happiness, O Israel! *i. e.* How great is thy happiness! how numerous the blessings which attend thee, O Israel! Thus the queen of Sheba, charm'd with the order and magnificence of Solomon's court, and with the wisdom of his discourses, cries out in an ecstasy of wonder, *Happy are thy men, &c.* or, O the happiness of thy men! *the happiness of these thy servants! who stand continually before thee; who hear thy wisdom*^b.

Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee! *i. e.* Who may compare with thee for happiness! what nation can boast of so many blessings and privileges as are enjoyed by thee! The prophet had just before said, *There is none like the God of Jesurun*^c; and now he declares there is none like the people who worshipped him. What God so great as Jehovah! what people so happy as Israel! He challenges the whole world to produce the like instance of a happy nation: *O Israel, who is like unto thee!* Just as he before appeals to the judgment of their enemies, whether their idol deities were to be compared to the God of Israel? *For their rock, says he, is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges*^d.

The happy condition of the Israelites above all other people, and the greatness of their God above other gods, is observed by the prophet David, when he commemorates

^b 1 Kings 10, 8.

^c Deut. 33, 26.

^d Chap. 32, 34.

their wonderful redemption from Egypt by the hand of the great God, who had also made known to them the true religion, and entred into a solemn covenant with them: *Wherefore thou art great*, says he, *O Lord God!* for there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee—*And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people unto himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people which thou didst redeem to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel, to be a people to thee for ever; and thou, Lord, art become their God.*

Their privilege in being entrusted with the word of God, by which their duty in all the parts of it was made known to them, is also celebrated by the psalmist as a very great and peculiar blessing: *He shews his word to Jacob, his statutes and judgments to Israel: he hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.*

And Moses excites them to a strict observance of the laws of God, by representing to them how much this would raise their reputation among the heathen, who should be forc'd to confess that no nation under heaven was so great, and wise, and happy as they, for the excellency of their laws and consti-

tutions, and the greatness of their privileges, especially that of offering their prayers to the true God, and receiving favourable answers from him: *Keep therefore, and do them*, says he, speaking of the divine commands; *for this is your wisdom and your understanding, in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people; for what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day?*

So that if we refer both to what Moses had observed to them before, and to what he insists on in our text, it must be confessed no people might compare with Israel for happiness, seeing they surpassed all other nations for the equity and perfection of their laws, and the purity of their worship, as well as for their miraculous deliverances and surprising victories. For having said, *Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee?* he explains himself in the following words, *O people, saved by the Lord! who is the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.* And indeed the blessings here mentioned suppose those recited before; for God exerted his

power in their favour for the honour of his name, and of the religion they professed; and the victories they obtain'd were the reward of their piety and holiness, or at least the encouragement of their repentance.

This leads us therefore to consider,

2. The account given us wherein their happiness consisted; namely, in the favour of God, who secured them from the power of their enemies, and made them triumph over them. For this happy state is,

First, Declared in general, and then more particularly described.

(1.) Their happiness is expressed in general, in that they were a *people saved by the Lord*; that is, delivered after an extraordinary manner, so as to distinguish them from all other nations, who only enjoyed the common benefits of the divine providence, but were not the objects of God's peculiar favour. And *to be saved by the Lord*, not only signifies to be protected by him, but to be rendered prosperous and victorious by his power. The Chaldee paraphrase renders the words, *O people, whose salvation is from the face of the Lord*; that is, by his special favour: and the word *salvation* is of so great extent in the Hebrew tongue, that it seems sometimes to comprize in it all sorts of blessings; therefore God himself is called *our salvation*^h, and the prophecies of the old testament describe our blessed Saviour by the same title, which is

^h Exod. 15. 2. Psal. 27. 1. and 118. 21. Luke 2. 30.

also given him in the new. And this term is frequently used to signify victoryⁱ as well as defence, and is sometimes so rendered in our English translation. But,

(2.) There is a more particular account given us of the happiness of Israel in the terms that follow, which plainly denote both their deliverances and victories, seeing God is said to be both *the shield of their help*, and *the sword of their excellency*: for a shield is an instrument used for defence, as a sword is for execution and slaughter.

As God is the protector of his people, he is often called their shield: *I am thy shield*^k, says God himself to Abraham; and says the psalmist, *Our soul waiteth for the Lord, he is our help and our shield*^l: which is the same thing with *the shield of their help* in our text. And 'tis to the same purpose that he is called *a rock*, *a fortress*, and *high tower*^m: for these terms, which properly signify places fortified either by nature or art, elegantly represent the safety of those who are under the divine protection.

The sword of thy excellency is rendered by some, *the sword of thy lifting up*; and thought to express the action of a warrior, who raises his weapon high when he designs to exert his utmost strength in a full blow on the head of his enemy; and so may denote a compleat

ⁱ 2 Sam. 23. 10. Psal. 98. 1.

^k Gen. 15. 1. See also Psal.

84. 11.

^l Psal. 33. 20.

^m Psal. 18. 1.

conquest:

conquest : which seems to be the sense of the Chaldee interpreter, who renders this phrase *the victories of thy strength*. Others translate it, *the sword of thy glory* ; by which may be signified the honour God did them in blessing their arms with so many glorious victories. But the Septuagint turns it, *the sword of thy glorying or boasting* ; which may respect the pious acknowledgment they ought to make to God as the author of all their victories, and their intire confidence in his assistance : and this last sense is expressed by the Syriac version, *thy help is in the Lord, and thy glory not in the sword* ; i. e. not in thy own sword. To the same effect speaks the psalmist : *Thou art my king, O God, command deliverances for Jacob. Thro' thee will we push down our enemies : thro' thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put to shame them that hated us. In God we boast all the day long : and praise thy name for ever* ⁿ.

When Moses declares that *their enemies should be found liars unto them, or should lie unto them* ; it may either signify the fraud and perfidiousness of their enemies, which yet should not secure them from the forces of the conquering tribes, who should execute just vengeance upon them for their treachery by treading on their high places ; or that

ⁿ Psal. 44. 4—8.

their enemies would make use of lying artifices and pretences of friendship to engage them to accept terms of peace, as the Gibeonites afterwards did in the time of Joshua at the approach of the Israelites^o: or that they should submit themselves to Israel, for so the same word is elsewhere rendered—*The strangers shall submit themselves unto me*^p, says the psalmist, or, *shall lie unto me*; that is, shall feign themselves pleased with my government, when their fear shall oblige them to submit. Or, lastly, it may be translated, *they shall fail or be frustrated*: to which purpose this word is used by the prophet Hosea, when he says, *The wine shall fail*^q; and by Habakkuk, when he says, *The labour of the olive shall fail*^r. And a like phrase is used in the Latin tongue, *Spem mentita seges*^t, to signify a crop failing—mens expectation. So that the sense may be, “Thy enemies shall
“be utterly disappointed, their big hopes
“shall become abortive, and their vain
“boasts shall prove but idle dreams and
“fictions.”

As for the phrase of treading upon their high places, it seems descriptive of the mountainous country that Israel was to conquer^s, some of which mountains were possessed by the Anakim, who were men of a gigantick

^o Josh. 9.

^p Psal. 18. 44.

^q Hos. 9. 2.

^r Habak. 3. 17.

^t Horat.

^s Mic. 1. 3.

stature, and had cities well fortified therein ^t; which agrees with what Moses says to the tribes in the foregoing chapter, when he speaks of God's special favour to them: *He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields: and he made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock* ^u. Or, to tread on high places, may signify the indignation God commanded this people to express against idolatry, in breaking down and trampling upon the images of the Canaanites, which were ordinarily set up on the tops of hills ^v; and therefore the places of idolatrous worship are so often term'd *high places* in the holy scripture. Tho some are of opinion, that this sentence should be translated, *Thou shalt tread upon their necks*, or, according to the Chaldee paraphrase, *on the necks of kings*; that is, *thou shalt triumph over them*. This was literally fulfilled on some of the kings of Canaan, who were subdued by Joshua, and thus treated by his order; who, when he had made them prisoners, *called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war, who went with him, Come near; put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them* ^w. After which they were put to death. And it is not unlikely that the royal psalmist alludes to this, when he

^t Josh. 11. 21.^u Deut. 32. 12. Isa. 68. 14.^v Deut. 12. 2, 3.^w Josh. 10. 24, 26.

acknowledges the honour God had done him, in giving him the necks of his enemies^x; and in his prophecy of the glorious kingdom of the Messiah, *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*^y. However, 'tis certain the holy scripture often speaks of treading upon enemies, to signify their intire overthrow, and the contemptible condition to which they are reduced, as well as to express the triumph of the conquerors: *Thro' God we shall do valiantly*, says king David; *for he it is that shall tread down our enemies*^z. And the psalmist seems to prophesy the triumph of Jesus Christ over his enemies, when he says, *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet*^a.

Upon the whole it appears, that as our text contains the last words of Moses, the expiring prophet, in an ecstasy of joy and wonder, therein represents the great and peculiar happiness of the Israelitish nation, in that they were under the special care and protection of the true God, who made them successful and victorious, while he frustrated the designs and disappointed the attempts of their enemies, and made them submit to their power, and furnish matter for their triumphs.

^x Psal. 18. 40.

^y Psal. 110. 1.

^z Psal. 108. 13.

^a Psal. 91. 13.

The words thus explained, give me a fair occasion more particularly to observe to you,

- I. How well the terms of our text agree with the history of Israel.
- II. How very happy that people was, in being so peculiarly favoured by God.
- III. I shall apply these things to our present circumstances, and the occasion of the solemn joy of this day.

But I shall first premise a few things, to obviate the difficulties, and prevent the objections that might otherwise occur in my way.

1. It may well be supposed that these words of Moses not only refer to the eminent deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptian army, their preservation and successes in the desert, and the new victories they were to expect over the Canaanites, whose country they were just going to invade; but are also a prophecy of all the remarkable deliverances and conquests with which it pleased God to bless that nation thro' all succeeding ages, till by their contempt of the true Messiah, and their obstinate rejection of his doctrine, they forfeited the protection of God, and were utterly disclaim'd and abandon'd by him. Therefore,

2. These words are not to be thought absolutely to predict an uninterrupted series of successes to this people, after what manner soever they should behave themselves; but

with certain limitations and conditions, which God made, in order to keep them in a constant subjection to his laws, and dependance on his providence.

It was necessary that the cause for which they engag'd in war should be just and approved by God, otherwise they had no reason to expect the interposition of his providence in their favour. Therefore king Solomon specifies this condition, when he prays that this people might be successful in war: *If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; then hear thou from the heavens their prayer, and their supplication, and maintain their cause^b.* Which prayer was accepted of God, as the following chapter declares. And on the occasion of a great victory obtained over the Hagarites by some of the tribes of Israel, the sacred historian says, *They were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hands, and all that were with them: for they cried unto God in the battle, and he was intreated of them, because they put their trust in him. And they took away their cattle—and of men a hundred thousand. For there fell down many slain; for the war was of God^c.*

^b 2 Chron. 6. 34, 35.

^c 1 Chron. 5. 20, 21, 22.

The passages just now mentioned shew, that as the occasion of their going to war ought to be lawful and just, so it was requisite to implore the divine assistance, by offering up solemn prayers for the success of their arms; otherwise they could not reasonably promise themselves that the goodness of their cause would secure them, but might justly fear a defeat, as the punishment of their self-confidence and impiety.

Another condition to qualify them for victory, was their strict adherence to the true religion, and their observance of the commands of God, without which they had reason to expect that all their prayers would be rejected as mere formality and hypocrisy, and themselves severely chastised by the hands of those pagan nations whose idols they adopted, and whose manners they imitated. Therefore Moses often foretels the many calamities which would befall them, whenever they should revolt from the true religion, and particularly in his song in the foregoing chapter: *But Jeshurun waxed fat and kick'd—He forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange Gods; with abominations provoked they him to anger^d, &c. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters: and he said, I will hide my face from them^e—I will*

^d Deut. 32. 15, 16.^e Ver. 19, 20.

heap mischiefs upon them, I will spend mine arrows upon them^f. — The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin; the suckling, with the man of grey hairs^g.

'Tis true, their unworthy and ingrateful carriage towards God, did not always stop the course of their successes: sometimes it pleased the Almighty to give them extraordinary proofs of his compassion, as well by his goodness to lead them to repentance, as to silence the blasphemy, and curb the insolence of their enemies; but they had no promises of deliverance and victory, except on the condition of a serious repentance and a national reformation, on which terms they might hope for the divine succour, as appears by Solomon's prayer: *If they sin against thee, for there is no man who sinneth not; and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies — If they return unto thee with all their heart and all their soul — Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer, and their supplication, and maintain their cause; and forgive thy people who have sinned against thee^h.*

3. We may remark, that this prophecy of Moses may be reasonably interpreted to respect not only the church of God under the old testament, but also that under the

^f Ver. 23.

^g Ver. 25.

^h 2 Chron. 6. 36 — 39.

new. For seeing the Jewish nation are allowed to have been a type of the christian church, the deliverances and victories of the former may well be accounted so many pledges and patterns of the wonderful preservation and triumphs of the latter, especially in such ages of the world wherein the circumstances of the one should resemble those of the other. It will be found very difficult to explain many of the prophecies contained in the holy scripture, without such an accommodation as this. And the new testament frequently applies to christians those promises which were originally made to the Jews in general, nay, sometimes to a particular member of the antient church. The promise made to Joshua, for instance, to encourage his invasion of Canaan ⁱ, is by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, applied to all true christians, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee* ^k; to fortify them against all the difficulties they might expect to encounter. For since the wisdom, power, and mercy of God are still the same, what reason is there to doubt of his readiness to display those perfections for the support and welfare of his people, whenever their pressing necessities and dangers, their hearty repentance for their past offences against God, their fervent supplication to him, and intire dependance on him, render it consistent with

ⁱ Deut. 31. 6. Josh. 1. 5. | ^k Heb. 13. 5.

his honour to give them victory over their enemies?

4. The predictions in our text, and those of the like kind in other parts of the holy scripture, are not to be extended to the case of every good man, but to those civil communities in which the true worship of God is maintained, and moral virtues countenanced and promoted. Some of the best of men have become victims to the fury of their enemies by an unjust persecution; and this is wisely permitted by the providence of God, both for their own improvement in grace and holiness, and for the advancement of religion in the minds of others by their example. But when any nation, or large society of men, are engaged in a just quarrel, and with true humiliation for their sins and reformation of their lives, seek the favour of God, and depend on his assistance, 'tis the constant course of providence to espouse their cause, and render them victorious over the enemies of their liberty and religion. Nay, heathen nations have often been remarkably blessed with prosperity and success, when, according to the measure of their knowledge, they have applied themselves to the cultivation of morality and the practice of virtue, and have discouraged vice and profaneness.

Nor does this any way impeach the justice of God: for seeing the special time of rewarding the virtues of particular men is
after

after this life, and this in proportion to their good works, and sufferings on the account of religion; it can be no injustice to expose them to those afflictions, which shall occasion the inhancement of their future happiness. And seeing civil communities are not to be rewarded as such in the world to come, where the judgment is only of particular persons; 'tis no wonder that God thinks fit to recompense them here, to encourage the practice of those virtues which are necessary to the well-being of society.

So that any nation may reasonably expect the like happiness with that attributed to Israel in the text, on the same terms which qualified that people for it; namely, a firm adherence to the true religion, and to the practice of morality.

With these precautions I proceed, according to the method before proposed,

I. To consider how well the terms in our text suit the antient state of the Israelites.

But here it can't be expected that I should give any other than a general account of this matter: the holy scripture is full of instances which verify these words of Moses. As this people were eminently saved by the Lord, he is called their *saviour*, and *the rock of their salvation*. How often did he appear to be the *shield of their help*! They were wonderfully preserved from the cruel designs of the king of Egypt, notwithstanding

ing the strict orders he had given for the massacre of all their male infants, that so the whole race of them might be extirpated; and from the fury of the Egyptian army, which hotly pursued them when they left that country at the command of God, where they had been in a state of tedious servitude. How well were they guarded by the providence of God during their pilgrimage in the desert, and when they took possession of the promis'd land! How well defended from the insults of their neighbouring enemies, who envied their settlement in Canaan! When all the men of Israël repaired to Jerusalem at the three annual feasts, their frontiers were miraculously protected; and those enemies who at other times attempted to dispossess them, were so restrain'd by a secret influence of God's power on their minds, that they did not so much as *desire their land*¹, while they were engaged in the service of God on those festivals. How wonderfully was the plot of Haman frustrated, when he had form'd a design to extirpate the whole Jewish nation! And how remarkably was his malice return'd with vengeance on his own head, while the Jews had their *sorrow turn'd into joy*, and their *mourning into a good day*^m! And how eminently were they defended both from the calumnies and forces of their enemies,

¹ Exod. 34. 24.| ^m Esth. 9. 22.

when they rebuilt Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah ⁿ !

As God was *the shield of their help*, so he was *the sword of their excellency*, in blessing their arms with frequent and surprising victories. While Moses was lifting up his hands in solemn prayer for them, they defeated the Amalekites ^o, who fell upon their rear in the wilderness ; and also the Ammonites, who opposed their passage thro' their country in their march to Canaan, and whose inhospitality was punished with a total overthrow ; both Sihon their king, and Og the king of Bashan, with their armies, being put to the sword ^p. The Midianites were as intirely conquered by a small detachment of the Israelites, under the command of Phineas, before they entered Canaan ^q.

And when Joshua took possession of the promis'd land ^r, a great number of kings and their armies fell by his sword, tho their cities were fortified, their numerous troops strengthened by confederacy, and some of their men of a prodigious stature. The time of the judges in like manner furnishes us with the many strange exploits and memorable victories of those great men whom God raised up to assert the liberty of Israel, and avenge them of their malicious enemies ^s. It would be a work of time to give

ⁿ Neh. 4.

^o Exod. 17.

^p Numb. 21.

^q Numb. 31.

^r Josh. ch. 9, 10, 11.

^s Judg. ch. 4, 5, 7.

a just account of the many trophies the countries of Moab and Ammon, Philistia, and other parts of Canaan, afforded to Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephtha, Sampson and Samuel ^s; of the mighty victories obtained, during the regal government, over the troops of Ammon, Amalek, and the Philistines, by Saul and Jonathan ^t; of the wonderful progress of the arms of David against the Jebusites, Philistines, Amalekites, Edomites, Moabites, and Syrians ^u; which gave so great an enlargement to his dominions, and was the occasion of so many triumphant psalms. The utter defeat of the Ethiopian army, consisting of a million of men, by king Asa ^v; the overthrow of the armies of Edom, Moab, and Ammon ^w, which help to make the reign of Jehoshaphat so bright a part of the Jewish history; Amaziah's victory over the Edomites ^x, that of Jotham over the Ammonitish army ^y; and the miraculous slaughter of the Assyrians, with their disgraceful retreat from the walls of Jerusalem, when that city seem'd altogether incapable of defence ^z, are incontestable proofs how constantly God fought the battles of Israel, while they were subject to

^s Chap. 14, 15, 16.

^t 1 Sam. 7. and Chap. 11,

13, 14, 15.

^u 1 Sam. 27. 2 Sam. 5. and

2 Sam. chap. 8, 9.

^v 2 Chron. 14.

^w Chap. 20.

^x Chap. 25.

^y Chap. 27.

^z 2 Kings 19.

his

his laws, and depended on the conduct of his providence. To all which may be added the wonderful atchievements of this people, recorded in the two books of the Maccabees, and by Josephus.

The astonishing, and sometimes miraculous manner in which the Israelites were often preserved, and their enemies destroyed, could not but convince the world that the great God was on their side. Sometimes an unaccountable fear and consternation seized the hearts of their enemies, as Moses foretold in his triumphant song: *The people shall hear and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone^a, &c.* And in another place—*Ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword: and five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight^b.* Thus the prodigious army of the Midianites fled before Gideon's three hundred men, and in their consternation madly turned every man his sword against his fellow. Sometimes the fiercest attacks made by the best disciplin'd troops of the enemies of Israel,

^a Exod. 15, 14, 15, 16. | ^b Lev. 26. 7, 8.

proved unsuccessful ; nor could their great numbers of horses and of iron chariots, preserve them from falling a prey to the prosperous arms of God's peculiar people. These sometimes were commanded to stand still to see the salvation of God, while he delivered them by his own arm alone ; as when he parted the Red-sea to open a road for their escape, and to prepare a grave for their enemies, who were soon overwhelm'd by the returning waters : and in the time of Jehoshaphat, when the confederate forces which came to attack that prince quarrelled among themselves, and sheath'd their swords in each other's bowels ; so that his troops had nothing to do but to sing the praises of God, and then load themselves with the spoil, according to the prediction of Mattaniah : *Ye shall not need, says he, to fight in this battle ; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem : fear not, nor be dismayed ; to morrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you^c.*

The fall of the walls of Jericho at the sound of rams-horns, the lamps and trumpets of Gideon's handful of men, shew those successes were more owing to the sword of the Lord, than to that of Joshua or Gideon. The reflection of the sun on the waters^d, which occasion'd a victory to Jehoshaphat

^c 2 Chron. 20. 17.

| ^d 2 Kings 3.

and the king in confederacy with him, by drawing their forces into an ambushment, serves to let us know that the divine providence sometimes accomplishes its ends by the most unthought of means, and can make any remote accident subserve to the ruin of one army and the triumph of another: whereas at other times the power of God has been eminently displayed in miracles, to render his people safe, and to make them victorious. Thus the waters of the Red-sea were separated to preserve Israel, and swallow up the power of Egypt: the sun stands still to favour Joshua in the pursuit of his enemies, while the artillery of heaven is discharged against them, and hailstones of an extraordinary weight kill more than the sword of the conquerors^e. And an angel is sent to raise the siege of Jerusalem, by cutting off 185000 of the Assyrian army in one night, which obliged the rest immediately to retire from the walls of that city.

As these instances shew what reason Israel had to glory in *the sword of the Lord*, which was lifted up in their defence, and rendered them conquerors; so they discover the vanity of the blasphemous boasts of their enemies, who were *found liars to them*, and often saw their vain-glorious threatenings come to nothing. Thus Moses, in his song at the Red-sea, observes, *The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the*

^e Josh. 10.

spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them^f. But what follows! Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods! Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders^g! After the like manner were the hopes of Zeba and Zalmunna, the princes of Midian, frustrated; who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession^h. How insolent were the words of Rabshakeh to the Jews, when he said, Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, the Lord will surely deliver usⁱ. — Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Have any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they, amongst all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand? that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand^k? And the instructions given by that general to his messengers, are no less blasphemous: Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Ju-

^f Exod. 15. 9.^g Ver. 10, 11.^h Psal. 83. 12.ⁱ Isa. 36. 14, 15.^k Ver. 18, 19, 20.

*dab, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria*¹, &c. But these vain boasts were soon punished by the hand of an angel, and all these menaces had no other effect, than to shew the vanity and impiety of him who uttered them.

By what has been said, 'tis evident that the great God who marched before Israel when they came out of Egypt, in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, as the symbol of his presence; and the captain of whose host appeared to Joshua with a drawn sword in his hand, to encourage that general to invade Canaan^m; made the Israelites often tread upon the high places of their enemies, gave them success in war, and frequent triumphs, while they resigned themselves to his conduct, and obeyed his righteous laws.

II. I am next to shew how great was the happiness of this people, in being under the special care and protection of God, and blessed with frequent victories.

And at the very first view, that nation must needs appear to have been very happy, who were delivered from a most abject state of slavery, and whose liberty was asserted from heaven by a long train of miracles:

¹ Isa. 37. 10.

^m Josh. 5. 13, 14, 15.

who,

who, as they were eminently preserved by God from the insults of their enemies in their march to a *land flowing with milk and honey*, so were brought into the possession of that fertile country by the most astonishing victories; and there made securely to enjoy the happy consequences of their military successes and triumphs, and in case of any fresh attacks of their enemies, to go out to battle with the assurance of returning conquerors, and of singing new triumphal hymns to the praise of the Lord of hosts, whose *right hand and holy arm obtained these victories*ⁿ, and made them tread on the necks of their enemies.

Can any one doubt of the happy state of that nation, who reap'd the fruits of their victories in the low submission of their enemies, in the awful respect of their neighbours, in the security of their lives, and in the quiet enjoyment of their estates in one of the happiest climates in the world, where they might have the true relish of liberty, while they sat *every man under his vine and fig-tree, none being able to make them afraid*? Nor did they only taste the sweets of all temporal blessings under an excellent civil constitution, and a body of laws composed by God himself, who was their governor as well as their saviour; but enjoyed those nobler pleasures that result from the knowledge

ⁿ Psal. 91. 1.

and practice of a religion, the truth and excellency of which was demonstrated to them by the fullest evidence.

Their preservation from the attempts of their enemies, and their victories over them, include not only the immediate joy and glory of their triumphs, and the extent of the fame and terror of their arms in other countries ; but also the consequent safety of their persons, the undisturbed conversation of their relations and friends, the prosperity of their families, the advancement of their trade and commerce, and the encouragement of their industry in the increase of their wealth, and in the improvement of arts and learning among them ; and, which is more than all the rest, the flourishing state of religion, the liberty of worshipping the true God *without the fear of men*, and the opportunity of encouraging holiness and virtue at home, as well as that of spreading the knowledge of the true religion in other nations.

So that whatever can be supposed dear and valuable to men in this world, and whatever tends to make them happy for ever in the world to come, is comprehended in the description of the state of Israel in our text.

Thus we see how much reason Moses had to say, *Happy art thou, O Israel ! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord ! &c.* as he elsewhere tells them, they should be

blessed above all people °; and sometimes particularly recounts the various blessings that should attend them, which are the same with those we have been observing. All these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field: blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep: blessed shall be thy basket and thy store: blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee, to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways—The Lord shall establish thee a holy people to himself, and all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of thee—The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain to thy land in its season, and to bless all the work of thy hand: and thou shalt lend to many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head only, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if thou hearken to the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day to observe and do P.

° Deut. 7. 14.

| P Deut. 28.

The view of the order of the camp of Israel in the wilderness, as well as the fame of what God had done for them, in delivering them from the bondage of Egypt, and in making them triumph over the Amalekites and Amorites, together with the prophetick discovery Balaam had of their future prosperity and glory, extorted blessings from the lips of that soothsayer, when he was tempted to curse them, by the offer of a very great reward from the king of Moab. *How shall I curse, says he, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? Behold I have received a command to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them^r. Surely there is no incantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought^f? How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel^s! God brought him forth out of Egypt: he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. He shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them thro' with arrows. — Blessed is he that bleisseth thee, and cursed is he that*

^a Num. 23. 8.^r Ver. 20, 21.^f Ver. 23.^s Chap. 24. 5.

curseth thee ^t. I shall conclude this head with the words of the psalmist: *Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is Jehovah* ^u.

III. I am now to apply the things on which I have insisted to our own circumstances, and especially to the happy occasion that has brought us together to celebrate the praises of God on this joyful day.

The present condition of England does in so many instances ^a resemble the antient state of Israel, that while I have been discoursing of the privileges of the one, I am sure you could not forget the happiness of the other. The temperature of our climate, and the fruitfulness of our soil; our commodious situation for trade, the wise constitution of our government, the good provision made by our laws for the preservation of our liberty and property, and the truth and excellency of our religion, render the comparison too obvious not to have been made in your own minds.

The indulgence of heaven towards us, in defeating the secret plots and open attempts of our enemies, in protecting our country from design'd invasions, and the best of our kings from the sword abroad, as well as from the assassinating dagger at home, all

^t Ver. 8, 9.

| ^u Psal. 144. 15.

shew how much we have been the objects of God's peculiar favour.

Without mentioning the many deliverances and victories wherewith God has honoured this nation, since reformed from the Romish religion, our own memory can furnish us with an account of the revolution, under the conduct of the late king William, whose name will always appear bright in our English history, as long as the love of liberty and religion shall obtain among us; that liberty which he so gloriously restored, and that religion which he so happily secured by the favourable providence of God, and which the same divine hand has preserved to us by many remarkable successes, and frequent returns of triumph both by sea and land: especially in the reign of her present majesty, who has received a singular honour from heaven on this account.

The never-to-be-forgotten victory of Hochstet, will shine, among the other great actions which adorn her reign, with a peculiar glory, not only in our own annals, but in the histories of other nations. a victory so great in itself and in its consequences, that we could scarce hope this age would ever see any thing like it, till the battle of Ramillies, and the following successes, convinced us, that nothing is too great to be expected by us, while God is *the shield of our help, and the sword of our excellency.*

As this wonderful progress of our arms, and those of our allies in Flanders, together with the eminent success attending the confederate troops in Spain, is the occasion of our present joy and thanksgiving ; I think it proper to excite you to the duty of praising that God to whom victory belongs, by giving you a brief representation of these great actions and their consequences, which now employ the thoughts, and engage the admiration of all Europe.

You cannot be ignorant, how great and early preparations were made this year, by the French king, to push the allies on all sides with the utmost vigor, in hope to retrieve his declining glory, and, as much as possible, to wipe off the disgrace of the battle of Hochstet. One army lays siege to Barcelona, another prepares to invest Turin. To favour the first design, the French fleet is sent with a vast quantity of warlike provisions ; and if they had carried this place, it would, in all appearance, have much facilitated their attempt on the other : and I need not tell you of how fatal consequence their success against those cities was likely to have been to the confederates in Spain and Savoy, and indeed in all Italy, where they had obtained some advantage against the German troops. The early advances of the enemy on the Rhine, where they had a numerous army, and the diligence they used to assemble a vast body of their best troops

troops in Flanders, to fall on the duke of Marlborough before all his forces had joined him, gave no very favourable aspect to our affairs, and made our enemies promise themselves certain victory; and what would have been the tragical effects of their triumph, if it had happened according to their expectation, is too obvious to need a particular account.

The French measures appeared to be well concerted, but they have been intirely broken by the arm of the Almighty. Barcelona has been very opportunely relieved; the enemy have quitted their camp with shame and loss. The confederate army in Flanders fall on their enemies, instead of expecting their attack, and have gain'd a compleat victory; by which the face of affairs thro'out Europe is extremely altered.

How remarkably did the providence of that God, whom winds and waves obey, interpose by a storm to retard the French fleet for many days, which prevented them from bringing the necessary provisions for their army before Barcelona; without which delay, in all human probability, that place had been taken, before the English fleet could have arrived to relieve it! How seasonably this succour came, when the siege was considerably advanced, and large breaches made in the walls, and the small number of regular troops within not likely to defend it long against so considerable an army as that which in-

vested it! What a remarkable courage and activity appeared in the young king who defended it, whom no persuasions could oblige to retire from the town, which if he had done, 'tis not unreasonable to suppose that city would have been surrendered before the arrival of our navy!

How much the expeditious march of the earl of Peterborough, and his application to relieve the town, by throwing in what succours he was able, contributed to the saving of that city, 'tis easy to conjecture; and seem no less honourable to that general, than the valour and good conduct he before shewed in the siege of it, by which he soon obliged that important place to surrender.

The precipitant motion of the French in the night from their camp, after a siege of 35 days, in which they are said to have wasted about a fourth part of their army, and the prodigious quantity of warlike stores they left behind them, all serve to inform us, that they were struck with the greatest consternation, being under the terrible apprehension of a difficult retreat, as indeed it happened to their considerable damage.

All the world sees the importance of the timely raising of this siege, the happy consequences of which daily appear in Spain, and give a fair prospect of restoring that people to their former liberty; besides the mighty influence it must be supposed to have on the
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the affairs of Piedmont and Italy, in favour of the confederacy.

While we were in pain for a place of so great consequence, the divine providence that had in the critical juncture secured it from the force of our enemies, before we could hear of its safety, happily surprized us with the news of the glorious victory at Ramillies: where, tho the French army was much superior in number to that of the allies, and a great part of it consisted of the best regiments of France, among whom were the troops of the king's household; tho they had the advantage of choosing their ground, and knew we were not on equal terms with them, the confederate troops not being all join'd; yet they received a mortal blow, the memory of which will descend to all succeeding ages.

The disorder and confusion into which they were put by the courage and vigor of our troops, and the conduct of their generals, the prodigious slaughter that was made among them, as well as the great number of prisoners that were taken, among whom were many officers of note, and the large spoil left in the field, render the victory very great and surprizing.

But the strange terror which seized the enemy in their flight, and made them abandon so many strong places, and the sudden submission of so many populous and wealthy cities and towns, make it much more considerable

siderable. A large and fertile country finds itself in an instant delivered from the tyrannick yoke of France, notwithstanding the great number of French garisons which aw'd them before: and what might have been accounted the work of an age, is performed in the compass of a few days.

The multitude of deserters who have quitted the service of our enemies, and joined themselves to the confederate army, has not a little weakened the former, and added in proportion to the strength of the latter.

Amidst these astonishing successes, we have great reason to own the favour of God in the eminent preservation of both the English and Dutch generals. Since the lives of those great men are so valuable to the publick, the fall of either of them in the field of battle, might have made a very unhappy impression on the army, and might have diminished, if not frustrated, the success of that memorable day. However, it would have drawn a veil on the lustre of this, and lessened our joy on this occasion; wherein we adore that kind act of providence which so signally preserved them both to see the glorious consequences of the victory then obtain'd.

As the distinguished character of the duke of Marlborough, for his knowledge and experience in the art of war, and the great credit he has abroad as well as in his own country,

country, make his presence necessary at the head of the confederate troops ; so this shews us how much reason we have to bless God for delivering him twice that day from the utmost danger, first when fallen from his horse, and then when he was remounting. Which wonderful preservation of that general, calls to mind the like favourable interposition of the divine hand several times, to divert the stroke of death from the late king William of glorious memory, when engaged in battle for us in the same cause of liberty, which is now again so vigorously asserted by the allies, and so happily favoured by the providence of God.

If we regard the consequences yet reasonably to be expected from this expeditious progress of our arms, the prospect may advance our hope to a pitch equal to that to which our admiration is raised by what is already done.

These operations, as great and extensive as they appear, are effected so early in the year ; victory, and the encouragements which attend it, have inspired the conquering troops with so much resolution and intrepidity ; and the defeated and broken army of France is so strangely terrified, that, as the latter seem incapable of attempting any great matter, till time has worn off the impression of that terror which has seized them, and rallied their dissipated spirits ; so it may well be supposed the former
will

will hardly think any enterprize too great, or any difficulty insuperable; while they are intirely satisfied in the conduct of their generals, and find the hand of the Almighty engaged on their side.

And here I can't forbear to observe, that on this occasion, as well as formerly, it has pleased God principally to honour the protestant troops in the confederacy: as if the design of providence was hereby to soften the minds of the Romanists, in favour of those against whom they had conceived an inveterate aversion; since they can't be insensible, that they chiefly owe the preservation and restitution of their liberty, and whatever else is valuable to them in the world, to those whom they have been taught to call hereticks. Who knows how far the obligations they find themselves under to the protestant princes, and their forces, may abate their bigotry, and diminish their prejudices, and dispose them to inquire into the reason of the religion of those, who concur so well with them in the cause of civil liberty?

Nor may I omit to remark, that the pious method her majesty has taken to open each campaign with publick prayers, has received a signal approbation from heaven by the many wonderful successes, which have given us so joyful opportunities as this to celebrate the divine praises. And the appointment of a national thanksgiving for
such

such eminent blessings, is no less an argument of the queen's piety, and has met with an uncommon reward, as an encouragement both to her majesty and her people, constantly to recommend the just cause wherein they are engaged to the conduct of that righteous and merciful God to whom victory belongs.

We are moreover to remember how good a foundation was laid by the providence of God for an effectual opposition to the efforts of our enemies, by inclining the parliament to that union and moderation, so frequently recommended by her majesty, which disposed them to an unanimous and early application to the publick business, that a timely provision might be made of the necessary supplies for carrying on the war with vigor.

The more extensive the good consequences of our triumphs are, with the more joy they ought to inspire the heart of every good man, who must needs be pleased with what he sees conducive to the happiness of mankind in general: but the large share this nation has in both the honour and advantages of these victories, is evident to every one of us, who values his liberty, and the free exercise of his religion.

Is it necessary I should remind you of the danger we have formerly been in of losing both, and how much blood and treasure has been expended for their security? Are there not instances enough in the world of the
miseries

miseries of those people, who have been so unhappy as to fall under a tyrannick power, particularly that of France?

Are not many thousands of the natives of that country, who are scattered thro' the world by a cruel persecution, and exposed to variety of hardships in foreign nations, so many living witnesses of the savage treatment we must have expected, if God had suffered the ambitious and bloody designs of that prince to succeed? Has not the cruelty he has exercised on prodigious numbers of his own people, by the confiscation of their estates, by ravishing their children from their arms, by the confinement of their persons in the most loathsome prisons, by breaking them on the wheel, by chaining them in galleys, there condemned to perpetual slavery; in a word, by making them suffer the most barbarous methods of torture that could be invented: has not this cruelty, I say, which renders the reign of that king so infamous, given us a just sense and relish of the great mercy of God, which has preserved us from falling a prey to his despotick power?

I hope it will not be thought that the mention of this inhuman treatment of our fellow-christians, which is apt to make nature recoil, and inspire men, who are not cruel or stupid, with trouble and horror, is now unseasonable; and that it draws a cloud on the lustre of this bright and chearful

ful day, which is devoted to joy and thanksgiving: for the terrible idea of the misery of those who live where arbitrary power obtains, ought to enliven our joys and increase our thankfulness to the divine majesty, who has preserved us from those fiery trials which once threatened us, and made us triumph over the enemies of his church.

Nor should we forget our suffering brethren at such a time as this; since the remembrance of their afflictions is proper to put us in mind of the demerit of our own sins, which might have long since exposed us to the same calamities, if the mercy of God had not prevented. And as our sympathy with those who still suffer these cruelties, is an obligation laid on us by our holy religion; so 'tis likely to set an edge on our devotion, and to render our prayers more fervent, when we address ourselves to God for the deliverance of those who are persecuted for righteousness-sake.

And 'tis not to be doubted, that while those good people groan under tyranny and persecution, it is some relief to their drooping spirits, some alleviation of their sufferings, to hear of the repeated victories obtained over their persecutors, of the establishment of the true religion, and the revival of liberty in other countries, which may give them a hopeful prospect of the restoration of the same blessings to themselves. Thus, since the apostle directs us to

rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep; as they partake of our joy, we should, by our christian commiseration, share in their sorrow.

And is there not a just ground of hope, that the honour God has done the protestant princes and states, in giving their arms such extraordinary success, is in order to give them one day an opportunity of expressing their gratitude to heaven, by re-establishing the protestant religion in those countries from whence it has been extirpated, by the most barbarous and perfidious methods, contrary to all law and justice, the most solemn oaths and sacred treaties? And who knows whether a work so just, so charitable, so pious, and every way so glorious, is not reserved for the reign of queen Anne; whose forces both by sea and land have had so great a hand in the mortification of that grand enemy of our religion, and of the liberty of mankind?

And now what shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? If we have any sense of religion, gratitude, or ingenuity, the service of this day, which is to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, will be as agreeable to us, as it is just and reasonable in itself.

God has been pleased to maintain the righteous cause in which we are engaged, and not only to defend us from the insults
of

of our enemies, but to punish their treachery and ambition, by making them fall before us in the field. Hereby he has preserved to us the enjoyment of whatever is justly valuable among men: hereby he has secured her majesty's throne and the protestant succession, and confirmed our hope of transmitting our holy religion and civil liberty to our posterity, notwithstanding the pretences and attempts which have been made to deprive us both of the one and of the other. How highly should we esteem those blessings, which have been endeared to us by so many wonderful turns of providence employed for their preservation! What a warm and lasting impression ought so many signal instances of the divine favour to make on all our minds! especially when we consider how unworthy of the least of all God's mercies our sins have rendered us, and how justly he might have punished us, by delivering us into the hands of those enemies, whose tender mercies are cruelty. Since he has not been *extreme to mark our iniquities*, but chuses by his goodness to lead us to repentance; since he has encouraged the efforts which have been made by our governors and others for a general reformation of manners, by these extraordinary successes of our arms, methinks it is a sufficient indication to us, that if good men of all ranks and characters among us were so wise and happy as to use their utmost endeavours

to advance that glorious work, we might expect to see yet greater things than these. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight ^v, &c.

But how great an unhappiness would it be, if those who have in so many respects been made by the indulgence of God to resemble the Israelites, his once peculiar people, should make themselves like them too in that ingratitude and folly, by which they too often interrupted the course of God's blessings, and incurred his severe displeasure. God forbid! that any of us should imitate that ungrateful people in the degeneracy of their manners; in their neglect of the essentials of religion, while they furiously contended for the minutest circumstances of it, and sometimes for things which had no just relation to it; and in their factious and inconstant temper, which made them uneasy under the happiest government, and murmur at the best of governors. For if we should imitate their sins, what reason have we to promise ourselves impunity, any more than they; who, by their folly, became at last as remarkable examples of God's extraordinary judgments, as they once were of his peculiar favours? After all the great things God has done for us, may we never give him

occasion to upbraid us as he did that people :
Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish nation ?
Is not he thy father, who hath bought thee ?
Hath he not made thee, and established thee ^w ?
 And to complain of us, as he did of them :
They are a nation void of counsel, neither is
there understanding in them ^x.

Let us beware, lest after having *sung the praises of God, we forget his works, and refuse to wait for his counsel ^y.* Let not our thanksgiving evaporate into pride and levity, or sink into intemperance and luxury ; but let it appear in a rational and religious joy, accompanied with an humble acknowledgment, that we owe all the successes we now celebrate to the *shield and sword of the Lord ;* that 'tis thro' him that our troops have done *valiantly,* and that *it is he who hath trodden down our enemies ^z.* Let us always depend on his almighty power, and the wise conduct of his providence. While *some trust in chariots, and some in horses,* let us still remember *the name of the Lord our God ^a.* Let our prayers, which he has so often answered, be constantly addressed to him, for the accomplishment of that great work of restoring liberty to Europe, which has been advanced to so good a degree by his special providence ; and for the prosperous and flourishing state of the church of God thro'out the world.

^w Deut. 32. 6.

^x Ver. 28.

^y Psal. 106. 12, 13.

^z Psal. 60. 12.

^a Psal. 20. 7.

Let us shew ourselves grateful to God, in giving all due honour to those illustrious persons whom he has chiefly employed to mortify the pride and insolence of our enemies, and to secure us from their power. Let our ingenuous and just acknowledgment of their merit, shew we are very far from envying them the glory of their prudence and valour : nor are we to forget how much we owe to the resolution and courage of the forces under their command, who have so often hazarded their lives for our safety.

Let us bless God for the great favour he has shown us, in placing her majesty on the throne of these kingdoms, under whose happy government we enjoy so many peculiar blessings. Let the eminent reward of her virtues, by the victories that God has given her, incite us to the imitation of her royal example. Let us continually pray for the happiness and prosperity of her person and government, and contribute all we can to the support of her throne.

To conclude : If our hearts were generally so affected with the triumphs God has given us, as to engage us to declare and maintain an irreconcilable war against our sins, we might reasonably hope, that as our enemies have been already *found liars*, both on the account of their fraud and treachery, and in regard of their vain-glory and boasting ; so we shall be blest with repeated victories, till we shall see peace and *righteousness*
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Serm. VI. *victory at Ramillies, &c.* 309

the stability of our times ; and that it shall still be said of England as it was of Israel : Happy art thou, O England ! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord ! the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency. And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.





A sermon preach'd on the 1st of *May*,
1707. being the day appointed for
a publick thanksgiving for the hap-
py union of *England* and *Scot-*
land.

S E R M O N VII.

Judges V. latter part of the 15th verse.

—*For the divisions of Reuben, there were
great thoughts of heart.*



S this day is devoted to solemn
joy and thanksgiving for the com-
mencement of the union of the
two kingdoms of Great Britain ;
it seems no less proper and sea-
sonable to reflect on the mischief and dan-
ger of division, than to look forward to the
happy consequences to be expected from a
well-concerted union : for both these views
are necessary to make us comprehend how
much we owe, first to the divine providence,
and

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and then to the good conduct of the government under which we live, for giving us this occasion of publick rejoicing, and consequently to dispose us to obey the call of both, in the performance of the duties of praise and gratitude after a becoming manner.

The text I have chosen for this purpose, is a passage of the song which Deborah composed, on occasion of the wonderful success of her arms against the Canaanites.

Whilst she applauds the vigor and courage of some of the tribes in the defence of their common liberty, she can't forbear to take notice of the great danger to which the state of Israel was exposed by those divisions, that made others of them less concerned for the publick interest, and less capable of serving it. For after having said, *Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek, after thee Benjamin among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer: and the princes of Issachar were with Deborah, even Issachar; and also Barak, he was sent on foot into the valley: she adds, For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart^b. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flock? for the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart^c. Gilead abode beyond Jordan,*

^b Ver. 14, 15.

| ^c Ver. 16.

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and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher
continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his
breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali were a peo-
ple that jeopardded their lives unto the death^d.—*
Tho these Reubenites were not the only
tribe who were hindered by their divisions
from an equal share both in the service and
honour of that glorious day, celebrated in
this triumphant song; yet their negligence
and coldness in the cause of liberty, confi-
dering the advantages they were under, are
particularly remarked by this princess. Not
that all the Israelites on the other side Jordan
were negligent of the common safety, *for
out of Machir came down governors*; that is,
from among the Manassites, who inhabited
Gilead, came some of the heads of families,
and joined their troops to those of the other
tribes. Nor were all on this side Jordan so
well-affected to the government of Deborah,
and to the glorious cause in which she was
engaged, as to assist her, on this emergency,
with a zeal becoming the occasion: for
which she mildly reproves them, when she
complains, *Why did Dan remain in ships?*
Asher continued on the sea-shore, &c.

But these supine or disaffected persons last
mentioned, that inhabited some parts of Ca-
naan, seem not so formidable either for their
number or power as those beyond Jordan;
and therefore this wise princess reflects on

^d Ver. 17.

their divisions with a repeated emphasis, as that which had extremely affected both her and those Israelites, who had heartily joined in the expedition against king Jabin: *For the divisions of Reuben, says she, there were great thoughts of heart.*

From which words I shall take occasion to inquire,

I. What were these divisions of Reuben.

II. What is signified by the great thoughts of heart concerning them.

I. What were these divisions of Reuben. Some think the people of this tribe were so divided among themselves, by the difference of their opinions concerning the present juncture of affairs, that they could come to no fix'd resolution of falling into those good measures which were taken by the greatest part of the tribes for the recovery of their liberty, and for their future security from tyranny and oppression: that tho they had a zeal equal to that of the other tribes for the general interest of Israel, in which their own welfare was involv'd; yet their intestine animosities and disputes made them too regardless of the common danger, and deprived them of an opportunity of signaling their valour, equally with their brethren, against the great enemy of their country.

Others

Others think the divisions of Reuben, in the text, signify, that this tribe, tho united among themselves, yet was making a separate interest from the rest; and that this unhappy division prevented them from sending their quota of auxiliary troops against the Canaanitish king, on the occasion of that glorious expedition of Deborah and Barak, which this song commemorates.

Neither of these interpretations is improbable, and I see no reason why they may not very well consist together: that they were in some sort divided in their sentiments and conduct from the rest of the tribes, appears by the complaint the prophetess makes of their *abiding in sheep-folds*, when they should have been in their tents; and of their contenting themselves *to hear the bleatings of their flocks*, when they ought to have attended the call of the trumpet. And 'tis not unlikely that they were divided among themselves on this occasion, since 'tis hard to imagine that any misunderstanding should so far prejudice that numerous and warlike tribe against their brethren, as to make them all intirely negligent of their own interest; and that they should all carry their resentments so high, whatever offence they had taken, as to chuse rather to expose themselves to the utmost danger, than to share the honour and advantage of a victory over the common enemy. 'Tis scarce to be doubted, that a great number
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of the Reubenites were in as good a disposition as the rest of the tribes to make a campaign with Deborah and Barak, in the defence of Israel; but their want of unanimity, and the feuds and animosities which may be supposed to have happened among them on this account, could not be so speedily extinguished, as to put them into a capacity of sending any considerable body of troops to the army.

What was the occasion of the discontent of the Reubenites, cannot easily be determined; whether they were not so early consulted, and their aid so particularly importuned in this war as they expected, as seems probable in that the troops of Naphtali and Zebulun were first assembled, and that this occasioned a murmuring among them, like that which afterwards happened among the Ephraimites against Gideon: *Why hast thou served us thus, say they, that thou didst not call us when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And, as the holy text adds, they chid him sharply^e: and as they afterwards contended with Jephtha, on a like occasion, in very severe terms; Wherefore didst thou pass over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thy house upon thee with fire^f*; which controversy rose to that height that it could not be decided without a bat-

^e Judg. 8. 1.

| ^f Judg. 12. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.

tle :

tle: or whether they supposed the enterprise of Deborah in making war with Jabin was too hazardous an undertaking, and if it should prove unsuccessful, likely to increase their misery; as the men of Succoth, with yet greater precaution, refused to furnish provision for the troops of Gideon, when in pursuit of the Midianites, lest these should rally again, and the course of victory should turn: as seems plain from their words, *Are the hands of Zeba and Zalmunna, i. e. the kings of Midian, now in thy hands, that we should give bread to thy army?* Whether, I say, they were uneasy on either of these accounts, I shall not determine. 'Tis not improbable the tribe of Reuben thought that deference and respect was not given them which belong'd to the eldest tribe; and how well soever they were satisfied at present with the unexceptionable government of Deborah, yet were apprehensive they might be less under a future governor, and therefore were resolv'd, upon her demise, to set up one of their own chusing: and already began to shew a diffidence of their brethren, not caring to be concern'd with them in any publick affairs. And perhaps their situation on the other side the river, gave rise to some differences about trade and commerce, which making their interest often interfere with that of the other tribes, proved a hinderance to their familiar conversation; and so their want of a good correspondence, might revive
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that jealousy in their minds which they formerly conceived, when they, with the Gadites, and part of the tribe of Manasseh, returned to their possessions, after the conquest of Canaan, and the settlement of the rest of the tribes in that country ; and which made them fear they should be treated not only as if they were a distinct nation, but as if they professed a different religion : to prevent which, they erected an altar on the borders of Canaan, as a standing testimony that they were true Israelites, as they declare to the rest of the tribes, when they took umbrage at that monument. — *In time to come, say they, your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel ? for the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you ; ye children of Reuben, and children of Gad, ye have no part in the Lord : so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar ; not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice, but that it may be a witness between us and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the Lord before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings : that your children may not say unto our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the Lord^s. It is not unlikely, I say, that that there was a re-*

^s Josh. 22. 24, &c.

vival of this former jealousy in the Reubenites, and that they thought the tribes on the other side Jordan scarce look'd on them as true Israelites, but as a nation divided from them by their interest and opinions, as well as situation ; and were uneasy that a prophetess of mount Ephraim should govern them ^h, since this made them with regret remember the translation of the birthright from them to the sons of Joseph, as the government was afterwards transferred to Judah : for thus the words of Jacob to Reuben, *Gen. 49. 4.* that *he should not excel*, are explained, *1 Chron. 5. 1, 2.* For *he*, i. e. *Reuben*, was the first-born : but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel ; and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler ; but the birthright was Joseph's. It cannot be thought this could be easily borne, and therefore they might conclude it would be most expedient to assert their antient sovereignty over the other tribes, or at least declare themselves intirely independent on them. But after all, whether this, or any other of the things above-mentioned, occasioned the divisions of Reuben spoken of in this passage of Deborah's song, the brevity of that history will not permit us certainly to resolve ; and

^h *Judg. 4. 5.*

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therefore we must content ourselves with such conjectures as appear to have the greatest probability. I shall therefore proceed,

II. To consider what is signified by the great thoughts of heart occasioned by this division.

We may be sure all those Israelites who had a true relish of liberty, and a sincere love to their religion, were not a little concerned at the divisions of Reuben, and that both before and after the conquest of the Canaanitish army: for the original will equally bear the words to be rendered, *For the divisions of Reuben there were, or there are, great thoughts of heart.* And 'tis not to be doubted that Deborah, who had nothing so much at heart as the welfare of all her people, was extremely thoughtful of the evil consequences which might attend these breaches, and very solicitous of finding means to repair them.

The greatness of her conquest over the nations of Canaan, can't make her forget the unreasonable factions of the tribes of Israel. The divisions of Reuben seem to abate the joy of victory, and now and then force a sigh from her, even in the midst of her triumphant song: *For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart*; and again, *For the divisions of Reuben great searchings of heart*: expressions which sufficiently declare the temper of the generous soul of that mother in Israel,

Israel, who could not think herself happy in her government, till her triumphs abroad were crown'd with union at home.

There is indeed a different turn given to these words by interpreters ; some render them, *In the divisions of Reuben were great men, and wise in heart, or, of a resolv'd mind.* So they seem to represent that parental compassion with which Deborah laments their divisions, since they had among them men no less famous for their knowledge and wisdom, than for their courage and resolution ; and therefore as capable of serving the publick in places of trust and honour as the rest of the tribes, if their differences could once be healed by a happy coalition. Others interpret the words, *At the divisions of Reuben, even of the great men, were great thoughts of heart ;* that is, at the divisions which were among the nobles, the statesmen, magistrates, and the heads of families, who made different parties, and divided the common people : or, *For the divisions of Reuben the great men had thoughts of heart ;* and so the text may represent the application of mind with which the greatest men in *Israel* inquired into the true causes of the divisions of *Reuben*, when they perceived the dangers likely to ensue upon them, and with which they consulted a method of union for rectifying the present disorders, and preventing future mischief, not without the earnest recommendation, and possibly the special commission
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of this wise and religious princess; who, by the success of her arms, as well as by the clemency and moderation of her government, was become equally the joy of her people and the terror of her enemies, and much more capable of disposing the minds of the Israelites to union and a good correspondence, than a less gracious and wise governor could be.

But seeing these thoughts of heart, both of Deborah and the nobles of Israel, or those reasonings and debates, as some turn the word, which were among them, seem plainly to import the great danger they apprehended from division, the good effects to be expected from a firm union, and also the great difficulty of bringing it about; all which might well engage their thoughts, and cause great consultations among them: I shall consider,

1. The danger of the divisions of Reuben.
 2. The good consequences to be hop'd from their union with the rest of the tribes.
- And,
3. The difficulty of accomplishing this work.

Which, as I said before, might justly occasion great thoughts of heart in Deborah, in all the men of sense and probity under her government; and particularly in the great men who were her chief counsellors, and best qualified for the highest employments in that nation.

The first thing which falls under our consideration, is the danger of the divisions of Reuben; which will appear very great, when we consider, that besides the common disadvantages of contention and division, by which men of differing parties are deprived of those good offices which they mutually owe each other, nothing is more frequently to be observed, than that the aversion which arises from the strife of contending communities, is easily fomented and increased: so that the difficulty of extinguishing it grows in proportion to the time of its continuance. The circumstances of Israel at this time rendered the danger so much the more terrible, in that the tribes had been long groaning under tyranny; and one would have thought should have learn'd so much moderation and prudence as to suspend their lesser quarrels, at least while they were companions in misery, and bowing under the yoke of a common oppressor; that they should have sacrificed their civil controversies to the publick welfare, and united all their forces to recover their antient liberty, and to secure to themselves the free exercise of their religion. How great was the risk they ran on this occasion, who rather chose to maintain their unreasonable divisions, than with united strength to attempt the stopping of that inundation of misery which threatened them all with equal ruin! The strength and number of king Jabin's army,

army, who had 900 chariots of iron, when the Israelites were far from a good posture of defence, since, by the testimony of Deborah, a shield or spear were scarce seen among 40000 in Israelⁱ; ought to have excited these to unanimity, as almost the only means left them to regain their liberty: and yet unhappily the breach continued during that hazardous war.

Nor did the danger vanish immediately after the overthrow of the Canaanitish forces; for it was not impossible that the tribes might use the same vigor in destroying each other, which they had before employed in vanquishing their enemies: and Deborah might well foresee that glorious victory she had obtained, and the consequent time of peace and tranquillity the nation had in view, would be so far from making them happy while their civil broils continued, that it might rather give them opportunity to sheathe their swords in the bowels of each other, if not timely prevented by some prudent method to re-unite them.

And who can recount the miseries which might have befallen Israel, if their divisions had continued, and broke out into a civil war? What a hinderance would this have been to their commerce? what a devastation must have ensued on their frontiers? what a considerable part of their land must

ⁱ Judg. 5. 8.

have lain uncultivated? And what frequent alarms on either side, what desolating excursions, what spoil and ravage, what cruelty and slaughter would have been the consequence of the continuance of this division, may be learn'd from that dreadful civil war which happen'd between the Benjamites and the rest of the Israelites, by which a tribe was likely to have been cut off from Israel^k; and by the wars between the two and the ten tribes at several times, after the fatal breach occasioned by the tyranny and stupidity of Rehoboam.

That which made their divided state threaten yet greater calamities, was, that the weakness of either party would prompt them to call in the aid of foreign princes, as it happened to the kings of Israel and Judah; and then 'tis easy to guess what a direct course was taken even by the conquering party to become an easy prey to their heathen confederates.

However, since they were surrounded with ill neighbours, those pagans whom, by the divine appointment, they had dispossessed of one of the most fertile and agreeable countries in the world; it must needs appear very dangerous for them to be disunited among themselves, since this might give occasion to their inveterate enemies to attack them with success, to seize their inheritan-

^k Judg. 20. and chap. 21. 6.

ces, and carry them and their families into captivity, or at least to reduce them to a state of slavery, and make them tributaries in their own country.

The danger of division among the tribes, not only affected their civil, but their religious state: for religion is not likely to prosper, where charity, the principal glory and beauty of it, is violated, and the very bond of perfection broken. What a scandal must the contentions of Israel have been to their heathen neighbours! and what a temptation to one party, at least, of the Israelites themselves, to apostatize to idolatry, in complaisance to their pagan confederates, thereby to secure their assistance against their brethren; and to banish from the minds of the people a desire of visiting the sanctuary of God at the solemn anniversary feasts, when all the males were obliged to worship there! And the sacred history assures us, this was the effect of that famous division of the ten tribes from the two in the time of Jeroboam.

When we moreover consider that the Gadites and Manassites, who had their portion of land with the Reubenites on the other side Jordan, were, in all appearance, engaged in the same interest with them, and that at least many of them were of their party; this division seems yet more terrible: for that they were a numerous and warlike people, appears by what is related of them

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on the occasion of a battle in which they conquered the Hagarites: *The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, were 44760 that went out to war*¹. And their popular pretence to sovereignty, by their antient claim of birth-right, might be supposed capable of drawing many weak and disaffected people even of other tribes to their party.

Well might such a division as this appear formidable to Deborah, and the elders of Israel; and make them think it worthy their best thoughts and greatest application to provide a timely remedy against this growing distemper, lest after the conquest of their enemies, the Israelites should *destroy themselves for lack of knowledge*.

2. As the danger and mischief of division must have given Deborah, and the wisest and best of her people, many careful and uneasy thoughts, and must have made them very solicitous to engage the divided tribes to coalesce; so the prospect of the blessings of peace and union could not fail to excite them strictly to apply their care and thoughts, in concerting and accomplishing so good and so glorious a design.

And here I can't better represent to you the great advantages which would certainly

¹ 1 Chron. 5. 18.

have accrued to Israel by union, than by desiring you to reflect on the miseries, already expressed, which must have attended their discord and division: for nothing can give you a more lively idea of the blessings of peace, than a genuine description of the calamities of war, if you make but this one reflection, That the latter is the very reverse of the former.

Deborah, and her senators, might well account the reconciliation of the tribes worthy their greatest care and deliberation; because they well knew the happy consequences which would attend that union: that when *peace was within the walls of Israel, prosperity would be in their palaces*: that this would give them credit and esteem in foreign nations, and render them formidable to their enemies, who would be forced to acknowledge their wisdom, and the great favours of the divine providence towards them, in such terms as these: *Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people; for what nation is there so great, who have God so nigh unto them^m? &c.* That this would secure their borders from the invasions of the idolatrous nations which surrounded them, who watched for opportunities of sowing discord among these brethren, and of surprising them with their armies, when divided: that this would en-

^m Deut. 4. 7.

gage the protection of that God whom they worshipped; so that what the psalmist speaks of Sion, would be true of the Israelitish nation in general: *God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain as of a woman in travailⁿ. Let mount Sion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Sion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death^o.*

Deborah and her nobles might well foresee that this union among the tribes would soon make the nation recover its antient vigor and grandeur, after a tedious servitude under the tyrant of Canaan, and the large expences of the late war for the recovery of their liberty: That *the high-ways should be no more unoccupied, and the travellers obliged to walk thro' by-ways: that the inhabitants of the villages should no more cease, as they had ceased in Israel, till Deborah arose; till she arose a mother in Israel^p. That they should be delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water; and there rehearse the righteous*

ⁿ Psal. 48. 3, 4, 5, 6.

^o Ver. 11, 12, 13, 14.

^p Judg. 5. 6, 7.

acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: and the people of the Lord should go down to the gates without fear^a. That art and commerce should flourish among them, and that the Israelites should reap the fruit of their industry, *every one under his vine and fig-tree, and none to make them afraid. That their garners should be full, affording all manner of store: that their sheep should bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets. That their oxen should be strong to labour: that there should be no breaking in nor going out; no complaining in their streets. Happy is the people that is in such a case: yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord.*

They might, with great pleasure, foresee how much this union would conduce to the advancement of true religion among the tribes; the sum of which is love and charity: *Charity which suffers long, and is kind, and envies not; charity that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things*^r. That now there would be no danger of persecution, when their civil interests would be the same, and all the tribes agreed in the substantials of religion, and that bar-

^a Ver. 11.

| 1 Cor. 13. 4—8.

barity and cruelty prevented, of which some of the tribes were guilty after their division and apostacy in the time of Jeroboam, for idolatry and persecution usually go together; when even the priests of Dan and Bethel imbrued their hands with the innocent blood of their brethren, who went up to worship at Jerusalem, according to the divine command. Of this cruelty the prophet Hosea seems to complain, when he says, *Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent; for they commit leudness*[†]. And again, when he says, —*The iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without*[‡]. *They made the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies*[†]. Such dreadful consequences of division as these, shew of how great importance it was to attempt a union among the tribes, and what a blessed prospect this prince and the senators of Israel might have of putting an effectual bar to persecution; a sin contrary to the light of nature, as well as to the precepts of that religion God had revealed to Israel; a crime highly provoking to God, and scandalous in the account of all mankind, who are not

† Hof. 6. 8, 9.

‡ Chap. 7. 1.

| † Ver. 3.

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so abandoned to their passions as to violate the plainest laws of reason and humanity.

But while the danger of division, and the good effects of union engaged the thoughts of Deborah and her councils, we can't suppose that the great difficulties attending this work did not occur to their minds; and, according to the words of our text, *occasioned great thoughts of heart*, much thought and contrivance, many debates and consultations: which is the last thing that falls under our notice from the text, *viz.*

3. The difficulty of accomplishing this great work. How hard a matter must it be to reconcile contending tribes or nations, when it often proves so difficult to unite two contending persons! The wisest of men observes, that *a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle*^u.

Since there is such a variety of tempers, and difference of interests among men; since they are prone to be led by their passions, and bias'd by a great number of prejudices, it must appear very difficult to make any large communities willing to coalesce and become one people, especially when their fears and suspicions of each other are risen to a great height. For in national differences there are seldom wanting those crafty

^u Prov. 18. 19.

incendiaries, who know how to aggravate offences, heighten jealousies, misrepresent the words and actions of men in publick employments; by these means to augment the flame, tho sometimes under the pretence of attempting to extinguish it. And 'tis not to be imagin'd there were none of this character among the tribes of Judah, in the time of Deborah.

There are usually, in affairs of this nature, so many demands and claims made on either side, so many men of influence to be satisfied, so many popular pretensions to be answered, so many precautions to be taken, so many inconveniences to be prevented, and so many niceties to be adjusted, that to make a union of this kind feasible at present, and durable in time to come, a prince had need have David's character, *To be wise as an angel of God*, in order to effect it.

On these accounts the divisions of Reuben seem'd to require the counsel of a prophetess, and the maturest thoughts of the Sanhedrim of Israel. Her extraordinary piety could not but prompt her to attempt a thing so much for the honour of religion, and for the publick welfare: her tender care of all the tribes, as she was their governor and a mother in Israel, made her reflect on their disorders with compassion, and earnestly desire to redress them.

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Tho the enterprize was great and difficult, and perhaps formerly attempted in vain; yet the surprizing success of her troops in the field, and her equal administration at home; the mildness of her government, as well as the terror of her arms, might well give her hopes of succeeding. The wisdom and moderation of her conduct towards all her people, when she sat on the throne of judgment, and the glorious victories she obtain'd in the field of battle, gave her the hearts of the Israelites, and made a re-union of the tribes appear not altogether impracticable. Her great wisdom could not fail to direct her to employ proper hands on so critical an occasion, and her great piety constantly to implore the blessing of heaven for the accomplishment of so just, so generous, and so charitable a design; and the prayer of a prophetess, and on such an occasion, was not likely to want a favourable answer.

Yet whether this princess had the glory of cementing at this time the divisions of which she complains, we have no express account in the brief history concerning her government. However, this joyful day gives us occasion to celebrate the success the divine providence has given the queen of Great-Britain, in accomplishing the union of these two kingdoms, which if they had remain'd divided, threatened us with no less dangers than those we have before enumerated; and
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now they are united, give us a no less happy prospect than what we have been taking of the union of the tribes of Israel; tho' our British was in danger of being obstructed by yet greater difficulties than those I have been reciting.

If we seriously reflect on the critical circumstances, wherein two different nations in the same island must necessarily be, especially if under two distinct princes; how hard a matter it would be to maintain a lasting peace, and how easy to kindle wars between them: if we consider how certainly great calamities would attend those wars, and how uncertain the event of them would be; what alliances the weaker side might be tempted to affect, and how fatal such measures might prove to both nations; we shall find we had lately no small occasion to apprehend that very sad consequences would attend the division of England and Scotland, in case the latter should chuse a distinct sovereign from the other, as they might have done after the present reign.

The history of the wars in England during the Saxon heptarchy, those between the houses of York and Lancaster, and those between England and Scotland; all shew how inconsistent it is with the peace and welfare of this island to be divided into different kingdoms.

Such a division must needs have weakened the protestant interest both at home and abroad,

abroad, and perhaps in time would have overthrown the succession of protestant princes to both nations ; since nothing is more apparent, than that intestine quarrels might give opportunity to some foreign power to introduce slavery and popery into the whole island.

Nor are the advantages to be expected from this union less obvious, than the dangers we had to apprehend from the continuance of division. Who is it that sees not how much it conduces to render Great-Britain more considerable to its allies, and more formidable to its enemies ? that it tends to inspire all of us, who love our liberty and religion, with those generous principles of charity and moderation, by which the publick peace and safety is best secured, and the honour of our holy religion best vindicated ? Her majesty and the parliament of both nations, by concurring in this act of union, have sufficiently signified to the world, that the different sentiments of protestants in matters of religion, are very consistent with their living peaceably together under the same government, and being mutually serviceable to the publick, according to their several capacities and stations.

What advantages this union gives us against both our intestine and foreign enemies, 'tis easy to discern ; and we hope a little time will farther explain how much it will strengthen the hands, as well as chear
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the hearts of the reform'd, in other parts of Europe: and who knows how much it may make way for the re-establishment of the reformation in those countries, from whence it has been extirpated by all the methods of treachery and violence? By the swift and wonderful progress of her majesty's arms abroad, and the speedy accomplishment of this union at home, the providence of God seems to indicate, that there is a harvest of glory still behind, and yet greater deeds are to adorn her reign, as the reward of her piety and moderation; and to encourage her majesty to employ her power and interest for the relief of those oppressed people, who have been persecuted with the least colour of reason, and with the utmost rigor in the world.

But I will not undertake to enumerate all the good consequences to be hoped from this union. If we have but a temper of mind suitable to so great a blessing, there is reason to hope that the present and future generations will call her blessed, who has been the happy instrument of effecting it, and that amidst a thousand difficulties.

What was endeavoured to no purpose in former reigns, and so earnestly recommended by the late king William of glorious memory without effect, has been reserved for the present: the difficulties attending this great work from the private interests and piques of great men, from the mixture of religious

religious and civil affairs, from the different views and prejudices of both nations, and from the critical circumstances of their trade, have been all surmounted, and that in a short space of time, by the good providence of that God, who alone can dispose men, under such different circumstances, to be of one mind; by the prudent conduct of the queen and her councils, and the exact management of her commissioners.

Thus while arbitrary princes, who think to make all things yield to their pleasure by force and violence, have often the mortification of seeing their best measures broken, and their well-laid designs prove abortive; those who govern a free and generous people, according to just and equal laws, have the satisfaction to find their good designs prosper, and surmount the greatest difficulties, while they reign in the hearts of their people, and *in all their ways acknowledge the great God, both by their prayers and thanksgivings, that he may direct their paths.*

As the queen has often paid this homage to the Almighty, and as frequently call'd on her people to join with her in the same devout exercises; so God has, on many occasions, granted her *her heart's desire, and not withholden the request of her lips.*

May the same good providence, which has given her the chief honour of breaking the chains of Europe, give her also the sa-

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tisfaction of seeing its liberty intirely secured, and its peace restored; and the same divine hand, that has succeeded her in uniting her protestant subjects at home, make her the glorious instrument of re-establishing the reform'd religion abroad!

And now what remains, but that we should *blefs the Lord with all our souls, and with all that is within us blefs his holy name*, for the union of England and Scotland; for the security he has hereby given us from the dangers we feared, for the hopeful prospect of the good consequences we have in view, and which will certainly arrive, if our sins prevent not, by provoking the Almighty to mingle a perverse spirit among us: for our destruction after all this may be from ourselves, or we may be altogether given up into the hands of our foreign enemies.

God forbid! that we should abuse so great mercies as those we now enjoy, and provoke him to punish us after so terrible a manner. How much is it to be wish'd, that the charitable temper of our minds, and purity of our lives, may recommend the holy religion we profess? How much better is it to imitate the generous and christian example of that princess, who has so often recommended moderation from the throne; and a greater pattern than her's, even that of our blessed Saviour himself, who *when he was reviled, reviled not again,*
than

than to write after the copy of those angry men, who even at this happy conjuncture, which ought to have inspired them with a disposition of unity and concord, have not feared to transgress the bounds of decency and justice, in traducing the names of their brethren to foreign protestants?

Let us be as far from following their maxims, as from imitating their manners; and confute their calumnies by a blameless conversation, *that our own consciences may not reproach us as long as we live*^v: so shall their ill-contrived slanders, in a little time, be no more credited abroad, than they are regarded at home.

It becomes us rather to mourn over the divisions and confusions which are in the world, whereby so many of our fellow-creatures are made miserable, especially to deplore the divisions among those of the reform'd religion; and each of us, in our several stations, to study *the things that may make for peace, and those whereby we may edify one another*.

May the union that takes place this day be never dissolved by our follies and sins! May Ephraim never more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim! May England and Scotland be for the future as much one in inclination and affection, as they are obliged to be by their duty and interest; that what has been solemnly confirmed on earth, may

^v Job 27. 6.

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be ratified in heaven ; and that what God has joined together, no man may put asunder ! That this union may be like that of Judah and Israel, predicted by Ezekiel : *Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel ; and one king shall be king to them all. And they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all* ^w.

^w Ezek. 37. 21, 22.





A sermon preach'd on *Thursday* the 17th of *February*, 1708-9. being appointed by her majesty for a solemn thanksgiving to almighty God, for the many and great successes of the confederate arms this last campaign.

S E R M O N VIII.

Gen. xiv. 18, 19, 20.

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine : and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said ; Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.



TH O the wickedness of the world before the flood was very great and provoking, yet we have no account of the establishment of tyranny, and of war, its fatal attendant, till after the universal deluge.

We then soon hear of the monarchy of Nimrod, the beginning of whose kingdom was Babel ; and of the unjust incroachments of divers other persons, whom the desire of dominion prompted to make a prey of mankind : such were those kings mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, who were intirely defeated by a confederate army under the command of Abram.

The first asserter of the common liberty, and scourge of arbitrary princes, that we read of, was this patriarch ; who, as he was styl'd the *friend of God* for his singular piety, proved no less the friend of men, in breaking the yokes of oppressors, and in vindicating the rights of injur'd nations.

This god-like temper of mind well became the *father of the faithful*, who acted as if he would in some sort anticipate the accomplishment of the promise God had made him, that *in him all the families of the earth should be blessed* * ; tho this especially related to the Messiah, who was to descend from him : for he endeavoured to diffuse the blessing of liberty among mankind, as far as he was capable, by his victorious arms, as well as that of the true religion by his exemplary faith and piety.

As he knew how with patience and resignation to sacrifice the most tender sentiments of human nature to the commands of God ; and quitting his country, his kin-

* Gen. 12. 3.

dred, and his father's house, obeyed the heavenly call, tho *he knew not whither he went* : so he had the justice and charity to expose himself to the various hazards of war, that he might restore those, who groan'd under the burden of slavery, to the enjoyment of their antient rights and privileges.

And by the same faith which supported him under all the inconveniences of a state of pilgrimage, for the sake of the true religion, he *subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and obtained promises*^y, even of the greatest blessings, both for himself and his posterity.

'Twas on his return from the slaughter of four potent princes, and the total defeat of their armies, that Melchizedek the king of Salem, and priest of the most high God, met him to congratulate the success of his arms ; while the holy patriarch ascribes this complete victory to the arm of the Lord of hosts, and dedicates a part of the spoil to the service of the altar : which is the true import of our text. For it contains,

- I. Melchizedek's congratulation ; and,
- II. Abram's offering.

In the first of these I shall particularly consider,

(1.) The occasion of this interview of Melchizedek and Abram.

^y Heb. 11. 33.

(2.) The character of this great man who congratulated the patriarch.

(3.) The congratulation itself.

(1.) As to the occasion :

It was, as I just now remarked, the return of Abram from a very memorable battle, in which he triumphed over four kings, who had a little before spread ruin and desolation thro' the adjacent countries.

The names of these princes we have in the beginning of the chapter, *viz.* Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations.

The first of these seems to have been a successor of Nimrod, who, as the holy scripture expresses it, *began to be a mighty one in the earth*, that is, attained to great power and dominion : *and was a mighty hunter before the Lord*² ; which the Targum of Jonathan renders *a rebel before the Lord* ; and the Jerusalem paraphrast interprets it *a hunter of the sons of men*, &c. and makes him a cruel persecutor, who would needs oblige men to forsake the true religion to obey his orders.

This phrase, *before the Lord*, may signify either his open and impudent defiance of the divine authority, as the men of Sodom are said to have been *wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly*³ ; or that God took

² Gen. 10. 8.

1 ³ Gen. 13. 13.

special notice of the criminal attempts of this arbitrary prince, and highly resented them: as 'tis said, *The earth was corrupt before God—And God looked upon the earth*^b, that is, with displeasure and anger, as appears by his threatening to destroy it, with its inhabitants, in the following words^c. And it seems the cruelty of Nimrod was so remarkable and notorious, that it became a proverb, when one would describe a tyrant, to say, *Even as Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord*^d.

Some think this prince made use of hunting as an occasion of drawing many active and valiant men to follow him; and that these were afterward employed as the instruments of his ambitious designs, and raised to that sovereignty to which he aspired: and this is reported as the artifice of Ninus the son of Belus, who is supposed to be the very same person whom Moses here calls Nimrod.

The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar^e. This appears to be the foundation of the Assyrian monarchy; for it was *from this land that Asbur*, to whom Assyria owes its name, *went forth and built Nineveh*^f: and the prophet Micah expressly calls Assyria *the land of Nimrod*^g.

^b Gen. 6. 11, 12.

^c Ver. 13.

^d Gen. 10. 9.

^e Gen. 10. 10.

^f Ver. 11.

^g Mic. 5. 6.

The second prince against whom Abram made war, was Arioch king of Ellasar, which some take to be Syria, or a part of it; but whether they are in the right or not, I shall not pretend to determine.

Chedorlaomer was the third, who is intitled king of Elam, a country thought to be so called from one of the sons of Shem of that name ^h, and supposed by some to be Media or Persia. As this prince was of the posterity of Shem, and had inflaved the Canaanites who descended from Ham, it seems an accomplishment of that prophecy of Noah, that Canaan should be the servant of Shem ⁱ.

The last of those princes was Tidal king of nations, which is taken by some for the country afterwards called Pamphylia. 'Tis not improbable that this title was given him because of the extent of his dominion, and of the different nations subject to him; or because his country was peopled by men of various nations, and made such a mixture of people, as that which afterwards laid the foundation of the Roman state. So 'tis supposed Galilee is called *Galilee of the Gentiles*, or nations, because a mix'd people inhabited that part of Palestina.

These four monarchs, it appears, were confederate; and Chedorlaomer, the chief of this dangerous alliance, had so far ex-

^h Gen. 10. 22.

ⁱ Gen. 9. 27.

tended his exorbitant power, as to subjugate five kings with their people, and to make them tributary to him. Their names are recited in the beginning of the chapter, *viz.* Bera king of Sodom, Birsah king of Gomorrah, Shinah king of Admah, She-meber king of Zebojim; and the king of Bela which is Zoar^k.

After these princes had borne the yoke of Chedorlaomer the space of twelve years, they began to give some signs of life, and to aspire after their former liberty, and at length had the courage to take up arms against the tyrant, who had so long oppressed them: for the sacred text tells us, *In the thirteenth year they rebelled*^l. And they shewed so much vigor on this occasion, that he was not able to reduce them till the year following; when this haughty monarch, and his three allies, united their forces, and carried blood and desolation thro' the neighbouring countries. *In the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth-Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh-Kirjathaim; and the Horites in their mount Seir, unto El-Paran, which is by the wilderness. And they returned, and came to En-Mishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt*

^k Gen. 14. 2.

l Ver. 4.

in Hazezon-Tamar ^m. These three terms, the Rephaims, Zuzims, and Emims, here mentioned, are, by the Chaldee paraphrast, interpreted *giants, mighty men, and terrible*. The first of them is elsewhere rendered *giants* in our English translation ⁿ. The Zumims are probably the same race of giants, who are called Zamzummim by Moses ^o; who also says, *The Emims were a people great and many, and tall as the Anakims* ^p.

Tho these nations were famous for their prodigious stature and strength, as well as for the greatness of their numbers, they were not able to stand the shock of the more powerful army of Chedorlaomer and his allies, who, like a rapid inundation, carried all before them.

The five kings who govern'd Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plain, with their dependances, took the field with their troops, to stem this impetuous tide, which threatened universal ruin, to defend their lately recovered liberty, and perhaps to restore the same blessing to their miserable neighbours.

With these hopes they join battle with the four tyrants in the vale of Siddim ^q: but as providence does not always favour the best of causes with immediate success, but often chastises vicious nations with the

^m Ver. 5, 6, 7.

ⁿ Deut. 2. 11.

^o Ver. 20.

^p Ver. 10.

^q Gen. 14. 8, 9, 10, 11.

sword of cruel usurpers; the five unhappy princes are defeated, a great number of their army slain, and the rest put to flight; while the insulting conquerors pillage their cities, and carry their families into captivity.

Among those who suffered by this public calamity, Lot, the nephew of Abram, was one^r: this great man, who was no less famous for his piety than for his wealth, was first plundered, and then led away prisoner by the enemy.

When this unhappy news was brought to Abram, by a person who had made his escape^f, he was sensibly touched with the severe affliction that had befallen so near a kinsman and so good a friend; and it could not but aggravate his trouble, that so zealous a worshipper of the true God should be involved in the common ruin. He was likewise moved with a generous compassion for those miserable princes and people, who, when they began to taste the pleasure of their lately recover'd liberty, soon found themselves reduced to a worse state of servitude than that they had endured before.

The noble patriarch immediately resolves on an expedition to relieve them; he gives orders to the troops of his household to arm^s; and having engaged Mamre, Eschol, and Aner, who were in alliance with him,

^r Gen. 13. 5, 6. 2 Pet. 2. 7.

^f Gen. 14. 12.

^s Ver. 13, 14.

he marches with the utmost diligence in pursuit of the conquerors: and having divided his army in the night^t, in order to attack them with the greater advantage, he soon put them to the rout. In this battle the four kings were put to the sword^u: and after a vigorous pursuit, to render this glorious action complete, Abram retakes all the prisoners they had carried away, and returns laden with the spoil, particularly all that the enemy had lately taken, when they pillaged the cities of the plain.

As he returns from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and the other kings who were with him; the king of Sodom goes out to meet him, not only to congratulate him on this great victory, but to offer him all the spoil he had recovered^v, as a grateful acknowledgment of the obligation both himself and his people were under to their great deliverer.

The generous proposal of the king is yet more generously refused by the patriarch^w, who took too great a pleasure in mortifying the pride of tyrants, and in doing right to the injured, to desire the possession of their estates as the price of their liberty; and therefore declares himself well content to have barely subsisted his own troops at their expence, and to have done justice to his confederates, in allowing them such a pro-

^t Ver. 15, 16.

^u Gen. 14. 17. Heb. 7. 1.

^v Gen. 14. 21.

^w Ver. 22, 23, 24.

portion of the booty as was reasonable for the service of their auxiliary forces.

Amidst all the honours which are done him on the account of his triumph, he does not forget to pay homage to that God *to whom victory belongs*, by devoting the tenth part of the spoils, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving, when Melchizedek came to congratulate him on this glorious occasion.

And this leads me to consider,

(2.) The character of this eminent person. He is described in the text both by his name *Melchizedek*, and by his dignity, *king of Salem, and priest of the most high God*.

According to the Chaldee paraphrast, Salem signifies Jerusalem; and indeed that city is so called, *Psal.* 76. 2. tho some others suppose it to be the same with Salim near Ænon, spoken of in the gospel, where John chose to baptize, *because there was much water* ^x.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews observes, that his name, Melchizedek, signifies *king of righteousness* ^y, and that his title, *king of Salem*, may be interpreted *king of peace*; intimating, that this description of him in the holy scripture was design'd to shew that his just and peaceful reign rendered him a fit type of Christ, who is called *the prince of peace, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no*

^x John 3. 23.

| ^y Heb. 7. 2.

end : for he shall order and establish his kingdom with judgment and justice for ever^z.

On which place some of the Hebrew doctors say, the name of the Messiah is Salem. This agrees with what the same prophet elsewhere expresses : *Behold a king shall reign in righteousness*^a, &c. And to describe the glory of his kingdom, he afterwards says, *The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever*^b. And the psalmist elegantly on the same subject, *Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other*^c.

Melchizedek is as well described by his priestly office, as by his royal dignity ; for he is said to be *the priest of the most high God*. In the time of the patriarchs the head of each family exercised the function of a priest as well as that of a ruler, as we may remark in the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob : and when divers families or tribes united in society, and put themselves under the conduct of a common head for their preservation and defence, they seem to have thought that none could be more worthy of the honour of the priesthood than righteous governors ; who, while they resembled God *in doing justice and in loving mercy*, could not but be acceptable to him ; and would not fail to make fervent intercession with God for that people,

^z Isa. 9. 6, 7.

^a Isa. 32. 1.

^b Ver. 17.

^c Psal. 85. 11.

whose

whose welfare it was their constant care to consult and promote.

The character of Melchizedek leaves no room to doubt that he was thus qualified for the administration of the affairs both of church and state, while he alternately dispensed justice from the throne, and performed the sacred service of the temple.

Whether he was the first instance of the conjunction of the regal and priestly office in the same person, is not so certain; but 'tis not unlikely, that the example of a person of his eminence might introduce this practice into several other nations: for Aristotle assures us, that *anciently kings both offered sacrifices, and had the conduct of war*^d. So Virgil, speaking of the king at Delos, gives him also the title of a priest^e. The antient kings of Rome had the same office, and the emperors were styl'd *pontifices maximi*, or chief priests.

'Tis plain Melchizedek worshipped the true God; for he is said to be *the priest of the most high God, or of the high and mighty God*, as some interpret it: a name of God oppos'd to the idols of the heathen, which are so often and so justly despised in the writings of the prophets, as unable to help their votaries; since they are void of sense, motion and life, and so more stupid than

^d Κύνει δ' ἦσαν τῆς τε καὶ πόλεμον ἡγεμονίας καὶ τῆς θυσίᾳ.
In Polit. l. 3. c. 10.

^e Rex Anius, rex idem hominum, Phœbique sacerdos.
Æneid. 3.

their very worshippers ^f. As the true God was antiently known by this name of *most high* in the land of Canaan, the title seems to have been long preserved among the Phenicians ^g, whose country was not very remote from that which Melchizedek governed.

This great man having been an eminent type of our blessed Saviour, the mystick reference of the name and titles of the former are explained in the epistle to the Hebrews ^h, when the author of that epistle is proving the dignity of Christ's priesthood to be superior to that of Aaron; since Christ is *called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek* ⁱ.

He cites the words of the psalmist, to shew that our Saviour was consecrated not without the oath of God: *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek* ^k. Whereas the Levitical priests were ordained without that solemnity; whence he infers the inferiority of their order.

He insinuates the same thing, when he shews that the Levitical priesthood had not the regal authority joined to it, since the royal dignity appertained to the tribe of Ju-

^f Isa. 41. 7. and ver. 22, 23, 24. Chap. 44. 9—20. Psal. 115. 4—9.

^g Philo Byblius speaking of the Phenician gods, names 'E-
ליה for one of them, which

appears to be the same with the Hebrew עֲלִי in our text.

^h Heb. 7. 11.

ⁱ Heb. 5. 10.

^k Psal. 110. 4. Heb. 7. 20, 21, 22.

dah, as the priesthood did to that of Levi¹; whereas both were united in Christ, who, as he sprang from the royal stock of Judah, so he was made a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, in whom both those offices concurred.

The benediction this great person pronounced on Abram, is improved to the same purpose by this inspired author, who says, *Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better*^m; intimating, that since the patriarch from whom Levi descended, received a solemn blessing from Melchizedek, the Levitical priests in the loins of Abram may be said to have been blessed by that priest, and the superiority of his order thereby signified.

To the same purpose, and after the same manner, he argues from Abram's paying tithes to Melchizedek. *Now consider*, says he, *how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abram gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people, &c. But he whose descent is not counted from them, received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises*ⁿ. *And, as I may so say, Levi also who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchi-*

¹ Heb. 7. 14.^m Ver. 6, 7.ⁿ Ver. 4, 5, 6.

zedek met him °. From all which he concludes the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood, and the perfection of that of Melchizedek ^p; and consequently that of Christ, who is a priest after his order.

Lastly, He confirms this doctrine by observing that the holy scripture represents the priesthood of Christ to be without succession, and of eternal duration; a privilege to which the house of Aaron could never pretend, since the death of one high priest of his family made it necessary for another to succeed in that office: and since both the Levitical priesthood, and the ceremonial law which appertained to it, were to be changed to give way to the more glorious dispensation of the gospel, in which the eternal priesthood of Christ was to take place. *And they truly*, says he, speaking of the priests under the law, *were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this man, because he continues ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood* ^q. And a little after, *For the law maketh men high priests, who have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore* ^r.

The priesthood of Aaron indeed in many things typified that of our Saviour, as the same epistle to the Hebrews plainly makes appear; but it was necessary the greater

° Ver. 9, 10.

^p Ver. 11.

^q Heb. 7. 23, 24, 25.

^r Ver. 28.

dignity of the latter should be prefigured, which is done by the character of Melchizedek, recorded in the old testament. And as the antient Jews thought the holy scripture almost constantly directed their view to the Messiah; so 'tis evident, that divers of the most eminent prophets, captains, judges, kings and priests, mentioned in the sacred history, were types of him: and therefore 'tis no wonder that this divine writer insists so much on the history of Melchizedek, in whom the office of a priest was united to that of a king, as a plain type of our Redeemer.

I don't think it necessary to recount the various conjectures which have been made about the king of Salem, by those whose too great curiosity has rendered them very solicitous to know who he was, and from what family he descended: for I take this inquiry to be as unnecessary and vain, as to seek after the sepulchre of Moses, which the scripture says, *No man knows to this day*^f; or that question of Manoah, who asked the angel that appeared to him, What was his name, and had no other answer than this, *Why askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret*^g?

But since the account given of him in the book of Genesis, and in the epistle to the Hebrews, sufficiently shews that he was

^f Deut. 34. 6.

^g Judg. 13. 17, 18.

a man^t, whatever some have advanced to the contrary; it may seem very strange that the author of this epistle should declare, he was *without father, without mother, without descent, or genealogy*^u; *having neither beginning of days, nor end of life*: and that *being made like the Son of God, he abides a priest continually*. Yet when 'tis suggested, as it is in the same place, that the priesthood of Christ was prefigured by this person, 'tis not so difficult to understand the meaning of those expressions; and that they are not to be taken in an absolute sense, as if he was without parentage and genealogy, as if he was never born, nor ever died; for this is inconsistent with the state of any mere man: but that the sense is, there is no account in his history of what family he descended, of the time of his birth, or that of his death; all which were purposely concealed, to render him as fit a type of our blessed Saviour, as the condition of a frail man would allow. For Christ may be said to be *without father*, in respect of his human nature; *without mother*, in regard of his divine; *without beginning of days*, as he is God; and *without end of life*, not only as he is God, but as he is man too, now since he is risen from the dead.

And seeing a more than ordinary care was antiently taken to preserve the genealogy both of kings and priests, and no such

^t Heb. 7. 4.

| ^u ἀγενεαλόγητος, ver. 3.
thing

thing is done for Melchizedek, notwithstanding his eminency in both offices, 'tis a sufficient indication that the account of his family and descent, of his birth and death, are omitted in the sacred history, to give him some shadow of resemblance to our Saviour, the dignity of whose person, and eternity of whose priesthood, he was design'd to typify and represent, as much as the circumstances of human nature could permit.

Having considered the character of that great prince who congratulated Abram, I am now,

(3.) To speak of the congratulation itself.

The great respect Melchizedek bare to the patriarch, is expressed in the text, by his going out *to meet him*, by the *entertainment* he gave him, and by the *blessing* he pronounced on him, on the occasion of his glorious expedition.

He took this opportunity, not only to shew his hospitality to Abram and his troops, who were probably much fatigu'd with long and speedy marches, but to express his affection to the noble cause of liberty, which Abram had vindicated with so much courage, resolution and good conduct, and which the providence of God had so signally favoured, in crowning his enterprises with the desired success.

Philo indeed says, *Melchizedek offered sacrifices* on the account of this victory^v; and

^v Ἐπιένια ἔθυσ.

'tis possible he might present to God other sacrifices besides that of praise on this occasion; seeing this is not at all inconsistent with his treating Abraham and his army with bread and wine. But the proof the Romanists pretend to bring for their sacrifice of the mass, from the supposition that bread and wine were the matter of Melchizedek's oblation, is too far fetch'd to need a serious refutation. Nor is it worth the while to give a particular account of a tradition which passes among the eastern christians, *That Melchizedek offered no bloody sacrifices, but only bread and wine* ^w. 'Tis much more reasonable to conclude, that as the Ammonites and Moabites exposed themselves to a curse, and were not suffered to enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, because they met not the Israelites with bread and water in the way, when they came out of Egypt ^x; so this pious prince, who entertain'd Abram and his forces with bread and wine, after they had been hazarding their lives for the service of the publick, entail'd a blessing on himself by this generous and hospitable act, while he pronounced a *blessing on him who had the promises*: which is the next thing under consideration.

^w Vid. Selden de Jure Nat. & Gent. juxta Hebr. l. 3. c. 2.

^x Deut, 23. 3, 4.

For one man *to bless* another, in the common use of that phrase, is to wish or pray for his happiness and prosperity: and it being usual for men to signify their respect to each other by the expression of such desires; *to bless*, in the Hebrew idiom, is *to salute*, or *pay respect*. Thus when Joseph presented his father to the king of Egypt, 'tis said, *Jacob blessed Pharaoh*^y; and the same phrase is used when he went out of the king's presence. And because 'tis common for men to take notice of the good qualities or actions of those whom they esteem, and to whom they would shew a great deal of respect, the same word sometimes imports *to praise*. Thus David says to Abigail, *Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, who hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood*^z, &c. As if he had said, Thy counsel is very much to be commended, and thou art worthy of esteem and praise, who hast given me this good advice.

Another principal part of civility is to acknowledge obligations; and so, *to bless*, may sometimes be interpreted, *to give thanks*. Thus when Joab had obtained leave of David to bring Absalom again to court after his exile; his grateful resentment of this favour is thus expressed: *Joab fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself, and thanked the king*^a, or *blessed the king*, as it is

^y Gen. 47. 7, 10.^z 1 Sam. 25. 33.^a 2 Sam. 14. 22.

in the original. And as respect and gratitude are often shewn by making presents, these are called blessings in the Hebrew dialect. *Receive my present from my hand*, says Jacob to his brother Esau; *for therefore I have seen thy face, as tho I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing, that is brought to thee*^b.

Nor is this word less frequently used for congratulation: for after the dedication of the temple of Solomon, we are told, *He sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people*^c. That is, they congratulated the king, on this occasion of publick joy and thanksgiving. And in this sense aged Simeon blessed Joseph, and Mary the mother of our Saviour^d.

According to this account, when our text says, Melchizedek blessed Abram, it may reasonably be supposed, that the king of Salem, at this interview, saluted the patriarch with great marks of affection and respect; that he commended his generosity and publick spirit, who so willingly drew his sword in defence of the rights of mankind, and shew'd no less conduct in the speedy march of his troops, and the prudent

^b Gen. 33. 10, 11. 1 Sam. 25. 27.

^c 1 Kings 8. 66.

^d Luke 2. 33, 34.

disposition of them to surprize the enemy, than courage in exposing his own person at the head of them : that he did not omit to recount the great obligations all the neighbouring princes owed to this victorious general, who had cleared the country of those tyrants, whose barbarity was become insupportable ; since they had laid waste so many fruitful countries, and depopulated so many cities already, and were likely to extend their exorbitant power much farther in a very little time : that he returned thanks to Abram, as the restorer and defender of the common liberty ; that he presented him some refreshments, and even regal'd his army with bread and wine, as an acknowledgment of his extraordinary services to the publick ; and that he congratulated him on so glorious and joyful an occasion, wishing him all imaginable prosperity and success for the future.

Melchizedek, in quality of a king, had reason to bless Abram after this manner : but the character of his priesthood gives us a yet more full idea of his blessing. For the prediction of future benefits is commonly called a blessing^e ; and in this sense the patriarchs were wont to bless their children. And as it sometimes signifies an act which properly belonged to the priestly office, it was not only a prayer for the prosperity

^e Gen. 27. and chap. 49.

of others, but a prophecy of their happiness. After this manner Aaron and his sons were ordered to bless the children of Israel under the law, saying, *The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*^f: for 'tis added, *And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them*^g. These sentences had the force of divine promises, and were pronounced in the name of God, to assure their accomplishment to all who worshipped and obeyed him. And in our text, instead of *blessed be Abram*, the Arabick version renders it, *Abram shall be blessed*.

That Melchizedek blessed Abram by virtue of his priestly office, appears, in that the author of the epistle to the Hebrews infers the authority and dignity of the former above the latter, from this very act, when he says, *Without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better*^h. So that there is no inconsistency in supposing that Melchizedek blessed Abram both in a civil and religious manner; that, as he was a priest, he added predictions of his success, and assurances of the favour of God, to the congratulation he made him as a king.

This is confirmed by the form of words he used in pronouncing this blessing, *Blessed*

^f Num. 6. 23—26.

^g Ver. 27.

^h Heb. 7. 7.

be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. For this name of *the most high God*, being used in opposition to the false gods of the pagan nations, was fit to be mentioned on this occasion, to excite the patriarch's faith and confidence in the divine favour and protection ; and the other title, of *possessor of heaven and earth*, which the Septuagint renders, *the maker of heaven and earth*, seems added to assert the sovereign authority and universal dominion of God. And thus, 'tis as if the royal priest had said, " May
 " the supreme Ruler of the world, who has
 " an undoubted right to govern the universe
 " which himself has created and upholds ;
 " may he, who has so signally exerted his
 " power in favour of those who fear and
 " serve him, in opposition to the proud and
 " cruel attempts of arbitrary princes, conti-
 " nue to crown thee with his blessing, who,
 " in confidence of his assistance and defence,
 " hast fought his battles, and vindicated the
 " cause of liberty, which the Almighty so
 " much approves." For *tho God's kingdom ruleth over all*ⁱ, as the psalmist speaks ; tho he has an uncontrollable power and authority, yet he governs the world by rules of wisdom and equity, and still tempers his sovereignty with clemency and goodness : for *shall not the judge of all the earth do right*^k ? Tho he *has a mighty arm, strong is his hand*,

ⁱ Psal. 103. 19.

^k Gen. 18. 25.

and

366 *A thanksgiving sermon for the
and high is his right hand ; yet justice and
judgment are the habitation of his throne, mer-
cy and truth go before his face*¹.

And if Melchizedek was a prophet, as in all appearance he was, since he is so much preferred to Abram, to whom that title is expressly given^m, he might be inspired to bless Abram at this time, to give him the greater assurance of the divine approbation of his expedition, and the future blessings he might expect as the reward of so glorious an undertaking.

'Tis, moreover, worthy a remark, that this blessing was soon after confirmed to Abram from heaven in a vision : for in the beginning of the fifteenth chapter 'tis said, *After these things came the word of the Lord to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.* And as this great victory was a pledge of the blessings God had promised him before, in these terms, *I will make of thee a great nation ; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing : And I will bless them that bless thee*ⁿ, &c. so we find this glorious action not only recorded to his immortal honour in this history of Moses, but celebrated long after by the eloquent and inspired pen of Isaiah : for the best interpreters believe this prophet gives a description of Abram, when he says,

¹ Psal. 89. 13, 14.

^m Gen. 20. 7.

ⁿ Gen. 12. 2, 3.

*Who hath raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? He gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and with the last, I am he °. And indeed some of the Jews think this victory, obtained over the four kings, an early presage and figure of the overthrow of the four great monarchies of the world, spoken of by the prophet Daniel; who, when he had predicted their destruction, adds, *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and all dominions shall serve and obey him* ^p.*

While the king of Salem does Abram the honour that his important services to the publick required, he does not forget to offer solemn praises to that God who rules the hosts of heaven, as well as the armies of men: for while he is congratulating and blessing the patriarch, he adds — *And blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand; or, who hath shut thine enemies into thy hand, as some chuse to render*

° Isa. 41. 2, 3, 4.

| ^p Dan. 7. 27.

it : an expression which seems to signify how much the divine providence interposed to favour Abram with success, by giving him an opportunity of inclosing his enemies, so as to give them an intire defeat. For whatever praise is due to the great benefactors of mankind, for procuring the publick welfare and peace, and whatever acknowledgment is due to their excellent qualities and illustrious actions ; yet the chief glory belongs to the *most High*, who *ruleth in every kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*¹ : who, when he sees fit, *cutteth off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth*² : who can infatuate their counsels, or break their well-concerted measures, and make their armies fly, even when none pursues : who can inspire those, whom he designs for conquerors, with prudence in counsel, courage in the time of danger, resolution in difficult circumstances, and presence of mind in the heat of battle ; and can incline the ballance of victory how and when he pleases.

The piety of Abram no less appears, on this account, than that of Melchizedek ; for while one offers solemn thanksgivings to God for this victory, the other humbly acknowledges the same blessing, in paying the homage of tithes, after Melchizedek's congratulation : for we propos'd to discourse,

¹ Dan. 4. 25.| ² Psal. 76. 12.

II. Of Abram's offering : *And he gave him tithes of all.*

He presented an oblation of the tenth part of the spoils he had taken, to the high priest, by way of homage to the most high God, in whose cause he had been engaged, who had preserved him from the perils of war, and had given him the necks of his enemies.

Some conjecture, that when he took the field he made a solemn vow to God, that if he would please to *cover his head in the day of battle*, and make him return a conqueror, he would pay this homage at his altar ; as Jacob afterwards vowed to pay the tithes of all his substance, if God would preserve him, supply him with *food and raiment*, and *return him to his father's house in peace*^s. 'Tis true, Abram tells the king of Sodom, that he had lifted up his hand to the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth^t ; that he would take nothing of the spoil which belong'd to that prince : but whether this vow was made before the victory, or if so, whether Abram bound his soul with the same sacred obligation to offer the tenth of his spoil, in case he should return in triumph, is uncertain.

However, 'tis not to be doubted, that as war is an appeal to God to give, by his pro-

^s Gen. 28. 20, 21, 22.

| ^t Gen. 14. 23.

vidence, a decision of such controversies between princes and states, as cannot be otherwise determined for want of sufficient arbiters on earth ; the pious patriarch had offered up his most fervent prayers for the divine assistance in so hazardous an undertaking. And now, neither the congratulations of the princes, nor the acclamations of the people whom he had rescued from the hands of tyrants, could make him forget the duty he owed to that God, who *had given him his heart's desire, and had not withholden the request of his lips* ^u.

'Tis observable, that the payment of tithes was a homage of a very antient date, as appears by what has been already said. Some vestiges of it are early to be found among some of the heathens, who devoted the tenth part of the product of their land, either to the service of their gods, or to the exigencies of the publick ; as appears by what Pisistratus, king of Athens, says in his letter to Solon ^v.

And under the law of Moses, God did not only claim the tithe of the product of their land as sacred to himself, and order it to be devoted to his service ^w ; but after the Israelites had obtained a victory over the Midia-

^u Psal. 21. 2.

^v Ἀπάγει δ' ἑκάστῳ Ἀθηνάων τὰ αὐτῷ κλήρου δεκάτην, ἔκ ἐμοί, ἀλλὰ ὁπόθεν ἔσται ἀναλῆν ἕως τε θυσίας τὰς δη-

μοτελεῖς, καὶ ἐπ' ἄλλο ἥν' καὶ νῶν, καὶ ἦν ὁ πόλεμος ἡμᾶς καὶ ταλαίβη. Diog. Laert. in vita Solon.

^w Lev. 27. 30, 31, 32.

nites, there was an offering not unlike this decimation by Abram^x: for a certain tribute was levy'd out of the spoil, which is call'd the heave-offering of the Lord. Something of this kind is referred to by the psalmist, when, after he had celebrated some great victory, he gives this exhortation: *Vow and pay to the Lord your God; let all that are round about him bring presents to him, who ought to be feared*^y. And when the prophet Micah foretels the great advantages the Jews should obtain over their enemies, he adds, *And I will consecrate their gain to the Lord, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth*^z.

As Melchizedek on the one hand did not think Abram less qualified for this great expedition, or less worthy of his blessing, because the church to which the latter belong'd, and in which he minister'd, consisted only of a large family of pilgrims; so neither did the patriarch scruple to pay tithes to the high priest, because he presided in a church of a more extensive form, and exercised a priesthood of an order different from his; since they both worshipped the true God with the same sincerity and piety.

It was not to increase his riches, or enlarge his dominion, that Abram took up arms; but he became the head of a confederacy, form'd purposely to mortify oppressors, and

^x Num. 31.

^y Psal. 76. 11.

^z Mic. 4. 13.

to relieve the oppressed: justice and mercy were the principles that animated and governed him in this enterprize, the success of which gave occasion to his humility and piety to shine with a distinguished lustre, in taking care to give the great God the glory due to his name, as the psalmist does on a like occasion: *It is God, says he, that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand has holden me up; and thy gentleness has made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; that my feet did not slip. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. For thou hast girded me with strength unto battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me*^a, &c.

And now that the sense of our text has been explained by the history of Abram's expedition, to which it refers, it appears to be no difficult matter to accommodate it to our present circumstances, and the occasion of our joy and thanksgiving to God this day.

^a Psal. 18. 32—39.

'Tis evident to every one who reflects on the state of publick affairs, that the people of this nation, and our allies, have the like reason to congratulate her majesty on the train of successes which has attended the confederate arms, that the kings of Canaan, and their people, had to shew the same respect to Abram; much more to offer solemn thanksgiving to the most high God, to whose special providence we owe all those victories and advantages, which give us so just reason of joy at this time.

The cause in which her majesty is engaged, is just and glorious, and of the same nature with that which Abram espoused. 'Tis to set bounds to the exorbitant power of a great tyrant, and of the princes confederate with him, if they may still be called princes, who have basely sacrificed their own honour, and their people's liberty, as much as in them lay, to the ambition of a tyrant; and were rather willing to become his vassals, in hope to tyrannize in their turn over slaves of an inferior rank, than to enjoy a just and regular authority, and to govern by rules of equity and reason.

Certainly all who are guided by principles of reason, and have any relish of religion, must own it to be a very glorious enterprize to succour men in distress, to relieve the oppressed, to restore liberty to captives, and to help them to right who are wrong'd. And as Abram's expedition against the four ty-

rants of Canaan was both approved of God, and applauded by men ; so the present war against France, and its allies, may be easily vindicated on the same principles, and 'tis to be hop'd will be at length crown'd with the same success.

And if besides the restitution of the common rights of mankind, Abram had a special regard to the deliverance of Lot and his family, not only on account of kindred, but of religion ; he did but act by a very equal rule, to *do good to all men, but especially to those of the household of faith.* And if the present war should issue in the intire restoration of the violated rights of protestants, as well as of the common liberty of Europe, it will render the undertaking so much the more glorious and memorable. And tho some of our allies differ very much from us in their sentiments as to matters of religion, this can't render our confederacy with them in defence of the publick liberty more unlawful, than Abram's alliance with Mamre, Eschol, and Aner, his heathen neighbours, and his taking part with the five kings of the plain on a like occasion. His prudence in this case was so far from being an impeachment of his piety, that he received at his return the approbation both of God and men for this glorious expedition.

The just congratulations her majesty has received both from abroad and at home, and particularly on the great successes of the last campaign,

campaign, resemble those which met the patriarch after his victory; and these successes themselves shew how much God delights *to honour those who honour him*, while *those that despise him are lightly esteemed*^b: and as Abram, when he returned laden with the spoils of his enemies, paid homage to the supreme Governor of the world, and thereby acknowledged that God had *taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight*, and that *he had given him the shield of his salvation*^c; so this excellent princess does, with like devotion, ascribe all the blessings which attend her reign, and particularly the repeated successes of her arms, to that God *by whom good kings and queens reign*^d; who *saves the afflicted and oppressed, and brings down high looks*^e; and wherein tyrants deal proudly, *shows himself to be above them*^f.

And as her majesty has made appear how much she has at heart the common welfare, by giving a considerable part of her property to carry on this necessary war with the greater vigour; so she has shewn her piety and zeal, in devoting another part of the revenue of her crown for the more honourable maintenance of a publick ministry, whose business it is to preach the gospel.

If we should trace the many remarkable steps of the divine providence for some years

^b 1 Sam. 2. 30.

^c Psal. 18. 34, 35.

^d Prov. 8. 15.

^e Psal. 18. 27.

^f Exod. 18. 11.

past, and take a view of the surprizing methods by which our civil and religious rights have been secured, against the secret designs and open force of our enemies ; the reflection would easily engage our wonder, and might justly raise our devotion.

Can we forget the late happy revolution, and the good consequences of it in the glorious reign of the late king William, without being unjust to the memory of that illustrious prince, and regardless of the foundation on which the present government stands, under which we enjoy so many privileges at present, and hope to transmit them secure to our posterity ?

I am loth to pass by in silence the celebrated victories of Blenheim and Ramillies, and that before the walls of Turin, and some other successes of the present war, which shine with a distinguished glory, and will continue so to do in generations to come : but I shall confine myself to a brief recital of some of the most memorable actions of the last campaign.

The disappointment of the intended invasion of Scotland in the beginning of the year, was a very eminent turn of providence in our favour. The confidence of success in that affair, expressed by the French agents in so many foreign courts, shew they had great assurance of abettors among us, if they had landed. The shock which was given to the publick credit on that occasion, ought
to

to put us in mind how much we owe to the hand of God for frustrating the main design of our enemies at that time.

The surprizing speed with which the English fleet was equipped to observe the enemy, the seasonable prevention of their landing, and their shameful return to their port, after they had severely suffered by the weather, may well furnish us with *songs of deliverance*, to the praise of him whom the winds and waves obey, and who doth what he pleases in heaven, and in earth, in the sea, and all deep places ².

This abortive enterprize not only tended to the disgrace of our enemies, but hindered them from executing their great projects in the Netherlands, where they expected to have prevailed by their numbers, if they could have diverted a part of the confederate forces, by making a descent in the north; and it must be confessed that their scheme was very well formed, had not God interposed for our help, and blasted their pernicious devices.

The same good providence blessed our troops with a considerable victory at Audenard, over the superior number of our enemies; preserved Antwerp from falling into their hands, and reduced Ghent and Bruges by the victorious arms of the allies, after those cities had been surprized by the enemy.

² Psal. 135. 6.

Nor should we omit to mention the wonderful progress of the forces of the duke of Savoy, who, notwithstanding the almost insuperable difficulties which encountered him, penetrated the territories of France, and made unexpected conquests there, to the great reputation of his prudent conduct and vigilance.

To these instances may be added the success of our fleets, both in the West-Indies and the Mediterranean sea, in the conquest of Sardinia and Minorca, and the easy reduction of Mahon, the chief fortress and port of that island.

But that which crowns all the rest, is, the forcing of those lines that had so long been a strong barrier to France, and thereby opening a way to raise contributions in that kingdom, together with the taking of the city and citadel of Lisle, notwithstanding the natural and artificial strength of that place, and the numerous garison which defended it; and this in the presence of the royal army of France, with the princes of the blood at the head of it, and under the direction of their most celebrated general; who made that enterprize as difficult as possible, by causing an inundation of the country about that important place, to cut off from the allies the stores which were necessary to carry on that memorable siege.

There

There are many circumstances which my time will not suffer me to recount, that add to the glory of these conquests : such as the preservation of the lives of those illustrious generals, who commanded the confederate army, when exposed to imminent danger : the favourable weather God was pleased to give for the carrying on the siege of Lisle, and for the reduction of Ghent and Bruges, at a time of the year, when, according to the ordinary course of things, it was not to be expected : the panick fear which seized our enemies, and their shameful flight from their intrenchments when the confederate troops past the Schelde ; and the very seasonable disappointment of the duke of Bavaria's design against Brussels.

All these are worthy of our special notice, and ought to dispose our minds to bless and adore the Almighty, and to rejoice in his salvation, in whose *name we set up our banners*^h ; and to encourage our addressees to him for the continuance of his favour, that all these successes may at length be crowned with an honourable and a lasting peace.

In the mean time the goodness of God should lead us to repentance, lest after so many deliverances from the hands of our enemies, and so many victories over them, he should at last suffer them to prevail against us, and to triumph over us : or lest

^h Psal. 20. 5.

he should punish us for our sins more severely, and more immediately by his own hand. And how *terrible a thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God*ⁱ ! Tho the arms of Abram were successful to deliver the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Admah and Zebojim, from the tyrants who plundered them, and led them into captivity ; yet his repeated intercession with God for them could not turn away his wrath, when neither the calamities they had suffered, nor the mercies they had received, made any impression on their minds to reclaim them from their vices^k. And their ingratitude to heaven, after so signal a deliverance from their enemies, drew vengeance down on their own heads in storms of fire and brimstone, to their utter destruction. May this nation avoid the same crimes, lest they incur a punishment like that which befel those miserable cities.

To conclude : Since God has blessed her majesty's reign with the accomplishment of that important union of England and Scotland, as well as with a long train of surprising victories and successes ; since he has rewarded her piety and moderation, in giving her so many triumphs over her enemies, and so great an esteem and affection in the hearts of her people, as appears by the una-

ⁱ Heb. 10. 31.| ^k Gen. 18.

nimity and zeal of their representatives for the support of her government, she may well be congratulated on this happy occasion as Abram was by Melchizedek, *Blessed be queen Anne of the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, who has delivered her enemies into her hand: or in the words of Deborah to Jael, when she had slain Sisera, after the defeat of the army of king Jabin, Blessed above women shall she be; blessed shall she be above women, &c.*

Let us express our joy, as the psalmist represents the people of Israel to have done, on a like occasion, for the success of their kings: let us say, *The queen shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall she rejoice! Thou hast given her her heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of her lips. Selah. For thou preventest her with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on her head¹. Her glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon her. For thou hast made her most blessed——Thou hast made her exceeding glad with thy countenance. For the queen trusteth in the Lord; and thro' the mercy of the most High she shall not be moved^m.*

And let us offer our fervent prayers to Almighty God for the preservation of her majesty's person, the prosperity of her go-

¹ Psal. 21. 1, 2, 3.

| ^m Ver. 5, 6, 7.

vernment,

vernment, the success of her arms ; and the support of her royal mind under the great affliction lately befallen her, by the death of the prince her consort, amidst the triumphs we have been commemorating. Let those who minister in sacred things, bless her majesty, in the words of the 20th psalm, *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble ; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee : send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Sion. Remember all thine offerings*—— *Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel. We will rejoice in thy salvation ; and in the name of our God we will set up our banners : the Lord fulfil all thy petitions.* Now know I, that the Lord saveth his anointed ; he will hear her from his holy heaven, with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses ; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down, and fallen ; but we are risen, and stand upright. Save, Lord, let the king hear us when we call.

And let all the people say, *Amen.*





The rest of the people of God.

A funeral sermon occasioned by the death of the reverend Mr. *John Piggott*, late minister of the gospel. Preach'd *March 29, 1713.*

S E R M O N IX.

Hebrews iv. 9.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

TIS to fulfil the desire of a dying friend, that I am now to discourse on these words. The worthy pastor of this congregation having some months before his decease, made choice of this passage, as a proper subject for his funeral sermon, importun'd me to undertake this service. He had then, it seems, *the sentence of death in himself*, and perceiv'd its gradual approaches, when

when we were willing to hope it was at a much greater distance from him, than what time has since made appear.

As it was the business of his life to consult your advantage, and to endeavour your edification; so he was solicitous that his death might be instructive to you too: for as the apostle Paul says of Timothy, *he naturally cared for your state*^a, and your welfare constantly engaged his thoughts in the time of his sickness, as well as that of his health; so he might well have expressed the temper of his mind toward you in the terms of the apostle Peter: *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, tho you know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance. Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle.*—Moreover, *I will endeavour that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance*^o.

When the distemper under which he laboured had so far weakened his constitution, that he supposed his *departure was at hand*, he was willing to have hazarded the remains of that life, the vigour of which he had spent in your service, to have obtained an opportunity of preaching to you one sermon more, and would gladly have been brought from his bed

^a Phil. 2. 20.

^o 2 Pet. 1. 12—15.

of languishing to the house of prayer, to have given you his dying charge, if possible, from this pulpit, whence you had so often heard him explain the principles, and enforce the duties of our holy religion. But alas! tho his *spirit was willing*, his *flesh was* then too weak for this service. However, what he could not perform himself, he was willing should in some sort be done by another. And tho his lips are now clos'd in the silent grave, yet, like Abel, *he being dead, yet speaketh* ^p: speaks by the sacred doctrine he so often inculcated on your minds in his sermons and exhortations, and by the holy example he gave you, when conversant among you; speaks by that faith and hope, that patience and meekness, that humility and resignation, that charity and kindness, which appeared both in the conduct of his life, and in his behaviour on a dying bed: speaks to let you know how excellent and necessary a thing true religion is, to make you happy in life and health, in sickness and at death: speaks by his own sickness and death, that *righteous men*, as well as others, *are taken away* ^q, and *the prophets do not live for ever* ^r; and to put you all in mind *how frail you are* ^s, that you may *so number your days, as to apply your hearts unto wisdom* ^t: speaks to you particularly by the words of our text, whereby he,

^p Heb. 11. 4.

^q Isa. 57. 1.

^r Zech. 1. 5.

^s Psal. 39. 4.

^t Psal. 90. 12.

after the most solemn manner, recommends to you, as a matter worthy of your utmost care, that you would secure to yourselves an *entrance into that rest which remains to the people of God. Being dead, I say, be yet speaketh*: but which is infinitely more awful, that God, whose word lives and abides for ever, whose word will be either a *savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death* to you^t, speaks, and that after the most obliging and importunate manner, to invite you to *enter into this rest*^u; and to *take heed lest any of you fall short of it thro' unbelief*^v.

The main design of the author of this epistle, is to shew how much the administration of the gospel is to be preferred to that of the law. This he makes appear by many arguments, the chief of which are taken from the dignity of the Mediator of the new testament, and from the excellency and perfection of his sacrifice.

When he had given a glorious idea of this Mediator in the first and second chapters, and had shewn in the beginning of the third, that he is as much superior to Moses, as a son is to a servant; at the seventh verse he takes occasion to exhort the Hebrews to attend to the doctrine of the gospel, and to warn them of the danger of an impious contempt, and obstinate refusal of the gracious proposals it contains; which, as he shews, would cer-

^t 2 Cor. 2. 16.

^u Heb. 3. 19.

^v Chap. 4. 1.

tainly expose them to a much severer sentence than that pronounced and executed on the Israelites for their disobedience and unbelief formerly in the wilderness.

This caution he thinks fit to give in the words of the psalmist : *Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, barden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation, in the wilderness ; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways : so I sware in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest* ^w.

To enforce this admonition, he suggests that David in these words prophesied of the time of the gospel, when he says, *To day, if ye will hear his voice, &c.* and that therefore 'tis reasonable to apply the example he produces of the punishment of the unbelieving tribes, who provoked God in the desert, to those who should reject the glad tidings of the gospel ; to shew the guilt and danger of the latter above the former, and that with as much greater force, as the light and grace of the gospel transcend whatever might seem most glorious in the law. Therefore he insists, ver. 12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort*

^w Psal. 95. Heb. 3. 7—12.

one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin ^x. And again—*With whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief* ^y.

Immediately after he had repeated this sad instance of God's judgment on rebellious Israel, he urges his former caution, and adds in the beginning of the fourth chapter; *Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we who have believed do enter into rest; as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest* ^z.

And to make it evident that the psalmist, in mentioning the oath of God against the Israelites, namely, *That they should not enter into his rest*, insinuates, that there is now also, in the time of the gospel, a rest proposed to us, which infidels shall be precluded, and into which those who believe shall certainly enter; he considers the several kinds of rest in which God is pleased to claim a pro-

^x Ver. 13.

^y Ver. 17, 18, 19.

^z Chap. 4. ver. 1, 2, 3.

perty, which are therefore called *his rests*, and into which his people may be said to enter, that so it may appear what rest that is which the prophet David intimates in the forecited words.

He shews first that it could not be the sabbath, that day of rest which ensued the creation, and in which it is said, *God rested from all his works*; since this rest takes its date from the foundation of the world: whereas the rest the psalmist means, is spoken of as yet to come.—*If they shall enter into my rest*; altho the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise: *And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest*^a. That is, they shall by no means enter into my rest, according to the import of the particle *if*, which in the Hebrew idiom implies a strong negation; and this is a form of speech especially used in swearing. Thus when Moses puts the tribes of Israel in mind of their obstinacy and unbelief, he adds, that *God was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation, see the good land, &c.* 'Tis in the original, *If a man among these men shall see*^b, &c.

He farther observes, that the rest, suggested by the psalmist, could not be the land

^a Ver. 3, 4, 5.

| ^b אם יראה איש.

of Canaan, tho this was also called God's rest, because Israel had been possessed of it long before the time of David. *Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying, in David, To day, after so long a time : as it is said, To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus, i. e. Joshua, had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day^c.*

The sum of this reasoning amounts to this : The royal psalmist, in warning men to hear the voice of God *to day*, and not to harden their hearts against it as the Israelites formerly did, lest they should be punished like them ; signifies, that by obeying this call of God, in believing the divine word, they shall be admitted into God's rest ; which can't here mean the sabbath, or the land of Canaan, tho each of these is call'd his rest ; because men enter'd into these long before the time of David, and therefore must be understood of a state of rest proposed by the gospel, of which he prophesies : so that the author of this epistle justly concludes in the words of our text, *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*

The method I shall take in treating these words, will be ;

- I. To give you a general idea of them, by a brief explication.

^c Ver. 7, 8.

II. To insist more particularly on the principal things contained in them.

I. I am to give a general view of the text, by explaining the terms of it: and am to shew,

1. What is signified by this *rest*.

2. Who are designed by this character, *The people of God*.

3. What is meant by the *remaining* of this rest to them.

1. As to the *rest* here spoken of, 'tis evident it signifies the state of happiness which the righteous shall enjoy in the world to come: and this term, like that of *peace*, is used in the holy scripture in a very extensive sense; and sometimes signifies,

(1.) That ease and repose which ensues a cessation of toil and labour; for these were first introduced by sin, and therefore 'tis a part of the curse pronounced on fallen man, that *in sorrow he should eat of the fruits of the ground all the days of his life*^d; and that *in the sweat of his face, he should eat his bread*^e. And that labour and sorrow, that vanity and vexation of spirit, of which the wise man so often complains in the book of Ecclesiastes, may well be taken for a comment on this righteous sentence. The misery of men, on this account, appeared to him so great, as to make him prefer the state

^d Gen. 3. 17.

^e Ver. 19.

of the *dead* to that of the *living*^f; and *the day of death to the day of one's birth*^g. Indeed to be delivered from these evils, is no inconsiderable advantage: tho we are not to imagine, that the rest spoken of in our text, only regards that of the body in the grave; however, this is taken notice of in scripture as a benefit. When Job describes the ease and quiet of the grave, he elegantly says, *There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master*^h. And the prophet Isaiah, speaking of the death of the righteous man, says, *He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds; each one walking in his uprightness*ⁱ. An angel speaks to the same purpose to the prophet Daniel, *Go thou thy way, till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of days*^k. And after the like manner the apostle John is instructed by a voice from heaven, saying, *Write; Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit; that they may rest from their labours; and their works follow them*^l.

But the rest in the text may be supposed, especially to regard that of the souls of good men, when separated from their bodies; for

^f Eccl. 4. 2.

^g Chap. 7. 1.

^h Job 3. 17, 18, 19.

ⁱ Isa. 57. 2.

^k Dan. 12. 13.

^l Rev. 14. 13.

while

while they are *absent from the body*, they will be *present with the Lord^m*, when they shall be free from all the fatigue and care which attend them in this life. Above all, it may denote that perfect state of rest which will follow the resurrection of the just, whose bodies and souls, when re-united, shall participate the same blessing, and enjoy an everlasting immunity from all toil, labour and uneasiness.

This sense of the word is confirmed, by the allusion which the author of this epistle makes in the context, both to the condition of the Israelites, who were delivered from a state of slavery and bondage, which they had long undergone in Egypt, and were promised a state of liberty and ease in the land of Canaan; and also to the rest of the sabbath, in which God is said to have rested from all his works, and which was designed to give men rest from their ordinary toil and labour: and therefore the words we are considering, run thus in the original, *There remains therefore a sabbatism for the people of God*; i. e. a cessation from all toil and labour.

(2.) This rest signifies a state of settlement and security, in opposition to the various changes and vicissitudes, the hazards and dangers which attend good men in this life. Thus when God promises the people of Is-

^m 2 Cor. 5. 8.

rael, that *his presence should go with them*, and that *he would give them rest*^a; 'tis plain, he hereby lets them know, that whereas they were now wandering in the desert, he would bring them to a settled state, and that he would at length secure them from the inconveniences and dangers which attended them during their pilgrimage. And when this people were freed from the calamity of war, 'tis said, their *land had rest from war*^o. On the same account 'tis said of David, that *the Lord gave him rest from all his enemies round about*^p: and it was prophesied of Solomon, that he should be *a man of rest*^q; that is, he should have a peaceful reign. To the like purpose the Jews are said to have *had rest from their enemies*^r, after the defeat of Haman's plot, to signify the tranquillity and safety they enjoyed on that occasion.

This well agrees with the reference made in the context to what was promised the Israelites; namely, that after all the journeys and toils of the wilderness for forty years, and all the wars which should attend them at their entrance into the promis'd land, they should at length attain a state of settlement and security. Thus good men, tho in a state of pilgrimage and warfare during their abode in this world, shall at last arrive at heaven, where there is perfect safety and

^a Exod. 33. 14.

^o Josh. 14. 15. Judg. 5. 31.

^p 2 Sam. 7. 1.

^q 1 Chron. 22. 9.

^r Esth. 9. 16.

tranquillity : tho all things here are fluctuating and subject to change, that state of glory is constant and permanent.

And as the tribes of Israel were promised the divine protection, so long as they were stedfast in God's covenant ; so that they should have no occasion to fear any invasion from their enemies, nay, that these should not so much as desire their land, when all the men were withdrawn from their frontiers, which happened thrice a year, when they were obliged to go up to Jerusalem to worship : so this might adumbrate that perfect security and uninterrupted tranquillity which the righteous shall enjoy in the heavenly state.

(3.) This term frequently signifies joy and pleasure, and is opposed to a state of grief and pain ; as appears by the account the apostle Paul gives of the future judgment, when he says to the Thessalonians, *It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ; and to you, who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels* ¹, &c. And when the apostle John describes the miseries of those who shall be condemned to eternal torments, he says, *They have no rest, day nor night* ².

The people of Israel were promised rest, in this sense, in the land of Canaan, in case

¹ 2 Theff. 1. 6, 7.

| ² Rev. 14. 11.

they

they were obedient to the divine laws. They were not only to be protected from calamities and dangers, so that none should make them afraid, *but to sit down under their vines and fig-trees* ^t, to enjoy health and long life, peace and plenty ^u: in short, the confluence of all temporal blessings, that might give them innocent pleasure and joy; or, to use the apostle's words on a like occasion, *to fill their hearts with food and gladness* ^v.

Lastly, Rest is often taken for complacency, content and satisfaction. Thus 'tis said, on the occasion of Noah's sacrifices, *The Lord smelled a sweet savour* ^w, or, as it is in the original, *a savour of rest*; to shew his offerings were very acceptable to God. And this phrase is elsewhere used, to shew God's complacency in the oblations which were presented him ^x, according to his own institution. And when the psalmist would calm the troubles of his mind, he thus expresses himself, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee* ^y. As if he had said, Return, O my soul, to thy usual refuge, to that content and satisfaction thou wert wont to enjoy in resigning thyself to the divine conduct, and in reflecting on God's past favours. Again, *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him* ^z, says

^t Zech. 3. 10.

^u Deut. 28. 2—14.

^v Acts 14. 17.

^w Gen. 8. 21.

^x Numb. 28. 2.

^y Psal. 116. 7.

^z Psal. 37. 7.

he ;

he ; that is, rest satisfied with his wise disposal of all events. . And when the prophet Zephaniah would shew how great complacency God takes in his people, he says, *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty ; he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing* ^a.

Thus we have a general idea of this rest, which not only signifies a cessation from toil and labour, but a state of settlement and security, and of joy and pleasure ; nay, that fulness of joy, which complacency and satisfaction denote : so that 'tis a term very fit to represent the happiness of the heavenly state.

2. We are now to consider who are the persons that shall attain this rest, designed by this character, *The people of God*.

'Tis well known that this title was, in antient times, given the tribes of Israel ; and 'tis to be observed, that the author of this epistle constantly alludes to such things, and uses such terms as that nation was perfectly well acquainted with. They were called the *people of God*, because they were selected from the rest of mankind to be, after a very particular manner, instructed in the knowledge of the divine will, and were taken into covenant with God ^b. They were form'd into a political state, of which God himself was the

^a Zeph. 3. 17.

^b Deut. 4. 31 — 35.

king, who gave them laws both ecclesiastical and civil; and by a long series of miracles, delivered and protected them from their enemies, so long as they remain'd stedfast in his covenant. On this account they were called, *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people* ^c.

Indeed they were not all Israel who were of Israel ^d, nor all the seed of Abraham, in the sense of the gospel, who descended from him according to the flesh; yet were they typical representatives of that *holy nation, that kingdom of priests, that peculiar people*, which God determined to collect for himself out of a degenerate world, during the state of the gospel: which wonderfully altered the face of religion, and brought in a lively hope and a new account of things, refining and raising the minds of men from carnal and earthly, to spiritual and heavenly objects. Under this pure dispensation, they only are counted *Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* ^e, who imitate the father of the faithful in believing the word of God, and prove themselves to be his children by imitating his example: they are reckoned Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile; who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ^f; who are regenerated by the efficacy of the holy Spirit ^g. These

^c Exod. 19. 5, 6. 1 Pet. 2. 9.

^d Rom. 9. 6, 7, 8.

^e Gal. 3. 29.

^f John 1. 13.

^g John 3. 5—8.

are the people of God, in the sense of our text, who truly believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and embrace his gospel. And 'tis to these that this *rest*, or state of happiness, *remains*; 'tis only they who *believe*, that *enter into this rest*^h. On the contrary, *without faith 'tis impossible to please God*ⁱ: and as the infidelity of the Israelites hindered them from entering into Canaan, so those who disbelieve and reject the gospel of Christ, will, without repentance, fall short of eternal felicity, and be exposed to the sentence of eternal death and misery.

3. The last thing to be explained, is the remaining of this rest: *There remaineth a rest to the people of God*. And this may import,

(1.) That this state of happiness is not to be expected in this present world: This is a state of pilgrimage, where good men find no rest for the soles of their feet: *I am a stranger with thee*, says the psalmist, *and a sojourner, as all my fathers were*^k. And the author of this epistle, speaking of the patriarchs, says, *They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth*; and adds, that *They who say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country*; and that they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city^l. This

^h Heb. 4. 3.

ⁱ Heb. 11. 6.

^k Psal. 39. 12.

^l Heb. 11. 13, 14, 15, 16.

is not their rest, but there remains a rest for them in the future state.

(2.) It may also denote the certainty of their enjoyment of this happiness; 'tis future, but 'tis real: the mansions of bliss are prepared for them. The glory they hope for, *the crown of righteousness* they expect, is said to be laid up for them in heaven ^m.

(3.) It may signify the duration of it. 'Tis not like the pleasures of this world, which are momentary and fleeting, and which may be compared to the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, as the wise man elegantly represents the *laughter of a fool* ⁿ; for after a little noise and short blaze, these trifling joys vanish and come to nothing, but often leave bitterness and remorse behind them. The things of this world perish in *the using* ^o, and the *fashion of it* continually *passeth away* ^p; but the saints have *in heaven a better and an enduring substance* ^q. Their crowns of glory never fade, their rest is not interrupted there, but remains to eternity.

Having explained the terms of the text, I am now,

II. More particularly to discourse on the principal things contained in it; and shall treat,

^m Col. 1. 5. 2 Tim. 4. 8.

ⁿ Eccl. 7. 6.

^o Col. 2. 22.

^p 1 Cor. 7. 21.

^q Heb. 1. 34.

1. Of the excellency of that future state of happiness, described here by *rest*.

2. Of the character of the persons who shall enjoy it, *viz. the people of God*.

3. Of the certainty of this state.

1. The excellency of this state of happiness, represented by *rest*, deserves our particular consideration.

We all naturally and necessarily desire to be happy, and to be as happy as 'tis possible for us to be : and what can we desire more, as large and importunate as our desires are, than to be intirely free from labour and toil, danger and disappointment, pain and sorrow, anxiety and discontent ; and to enjoy constant ease and repose, undisturbed safety, exquisite joy, and perfect satisfaction ? Yet no less happiness than this is signified by that *rest which remains to the people of God*, as you have heard before. 'Tis such indeed as *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*^r. 'Tis a considerable advantage to be delivered from all the toil and vexation, cares and troubles, fears and hazards, which attend us in our present state ; to have *tears wiped from all eyes*, when there shall be *no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain*^s. But 'tis a much higher degree of happiness, to have

^r 1 Cor. 2. 9.

^s 1 Rev. 21. 4.

the capacity of the soul enlarged and refined, to receive and relish heavenly joys, and then to have its desires intirely satisfied, and *filled with all the fulness of God* *. Safety and tranquillity would make a moderate degree of the accommodations of this life very comfortable : but what words can express the excellency of that state and place, where the highest pleasure is join'd with the utmost security, and where there's not the least fear of losing that divine favour, which gives the soul the greatest content and satisfaction ; where there is *fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore* † ?

The many bright images and elegant figures, used in the holy scripture to describe this blessed state, fall infinitely short of its real glory : but as the objects of sense easily and strongly affect us, the word of God represents the celestial glory by every thing which men chiefly admire and esteem in this world ; that by striking their imaginations, their attention may be engaged to consider the real excellency of that happiness, and how to secure to themselves the enjoyment of it.

What a magnificent description is given us of the new Jerusalem by the apostle John in his Revelation ^u ! What *glorious things are spoken of the city of God* ! The walls are great and high, the building regular and

* Eph. 3. 19.

† Psal. 16. 11.

| ^u Chap. 21, 22.

noble ;

noble ; the materials of the wall are jasper, and the streets of the city pure gold, like transparent glass ; the foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones, the twelve gates twelve intire pearls : 'tis adorned with the throne of God, and favoured with the continual presence of his glory, and that of our blessed Saviour, which illuminate this holy city. A river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the lamb, flows thro' the midst of it ; on the banks of which grows the tree of life, bearing great variety of fruits every month, and leaves which have a healing virtue.

The inhabitants are dignified with the titles of *kings and priests*, who shall live and reign for ever. The crowns which are given them, the robes they wear, and the palms they carry in their hands, the places assign'd them on the throne of Christ, to sit with him, as he sits on his Father's throne ^v, give us an idea of the highest glory to which creatures can be advanced : and their being fed with the fruits of the tree of life in the paradise of God, and with the hidden manna, and led by the Lamb to living fountains of water, and many like expressions, shew the exquisite pleasure which shall attend their being *ever with the Lord*.

It's reasonable to believe, that the favours to be bestowed in the heavenly state on those

^v Chap. 7. 17.

whom the King of kings shall delight to honour, will be suitable to the greatness both of his power and of his love ; and that those to whom he disdains not at present to give the endearing titles of his children and his friends, shall share those honours and delights, which are agreeable to the dignity of such a relation.

It may be also justly concluded, that a felicity purchased for them at so vast a price as that of the blood of the Son of God, must bear some proportion to the merit of this wonderful sacrifice ; and that the effects of that divine *love, which passeth knowledge*, will appear as well in the greatness of the bliss our Saviour has procured for them, as in the greatness of the sufferings he endured to accomplish that glorious design.

'Twas with this view, when he was ready to lay down his life, that he prayed so earnestly to his Father, that his disciples might be with him in that state of glory to which he was to be advanced, as a reward of his sufferings, that they might behold his glory, and partake of it : and 'twas to encourage them to believe and aspire after so great a privilege, that he assures them of his ascension, to take possession of heaven as their forerunner, and to provide mansions of glory for them.

But I confess this is a very general account of a matter, which well deserves to be more particularly discussed : I shall therefore consider

sider this state of happiness, with reference to the faculties and capacities of the subjects of it.

(1.) If we consider man as an intelligent being, we can't suppose him capable of happiness, without the gratification of his rational powers. As his perception, reason and judgment are faculties, which shew the high rank he has among the various orders of creatures, 'tis not to be conceived that he can be truly happy, unless these be agreeably entertained with proper objects, and secured from errors and mistakes. Mankind is so sensible of this, that those who have allowed themselves the most time to think, and reflect on the dignity and capacity of their being, have expressed the most importunate desire after knowledge and wisdom; being convinced that a rational creature could not be happy without these. And when the wise man, in the book of Proverbs, so elegantly describes the happiness of those who apply themselves to acquire knowledge and understanding; as he shews thereby the excellency of religion, which is founded on principles of eternal truth and prudence; so he proceeds on the supposition, that 'tis impossible to be happy in a state of error and folly.

How many great minds have undergone a multitude of inconveniences and disadvantages, rather than they would want the satisfaction of improving their intellectual talents; and have with extraordinary vigor and

application pursued such studies, as others have accounted more dry than profitable! which however shews, that the knowledge even of things less important is desirable; how much more the knowledge of truths of the highest nature and consequence?

And if, notwithstanding the small advance the greatest genius can make in the knowledge of truth in this world, because of the shortness of human life; yet that degree of it which is attainable, has charms enow to encourage great attention and industry, and to make the inquirers after truth easily overcome the fatigue of close study, and despise many temporal inconveniences which attend it, so as sometimes to forget the necessities of their frail bodies: what pleasure must the soul find in knowledge infinitely more extensive and important, and attained without labour and toil, such as the saints shall enjoy in heaven!

The great distinction we make between men in our esteem, with respect to the different measures of wisdom and knowledge we imagine they possess, shews that mankind are agreed that these greatly enoble our nature, and have a proper tendency to make us happy. How great then must be the felicity, how great the glory of the future world, where the righteous shall have those divine truths, which are of the highest importance, clearly set before them; and their minds enlarged to perceive them distinctly, and without

without difficulty applied to the contemplation of them ! With what joy and admiration will they be filled, when they *know as they are known*, and *see, not as in a glass, darkly*, or obscurely, but *clearly, and face to face* ^w !

Here we are at great uncertainties ; sometimes groping intirely in the dark, and at best enjoying but some little glimmerings of light : how great will the joy of the soul be, when she comes to see truth in its native beauty, and is delivered both from the fear of mistaking, and from the uneasiness of doubting !

Some persons are very imprudent, in the choice they make of pursuing such parts of knowledge as are less valuable, and yet find no inconsiderable pleasure in such pursuits : how entertaining then must the intimate knowledge of God, of his nature, his decrees, his works and laws, be to souls qualified for the intuition of these things, which are capable of engaging the attention, and satisfying the desires of myriads of angels and men to eternity !

Our ignorance, our proneness to give into mistakes, our various prejudices, and our impatience in the research of truth, often prompt us to embrace its shadow and appearance, instead of the substance and reality : but the heavenly perfection will re-

move from our souls every false bias, and intirely free us from all prepossession and illusion. There will be no want of time for the investigation of truth, where eternity will be spent in that happy imployment; and this without any of those avocations, which, by reason of the infirmities of our nature, or the necessities of our fellow-creatures, so often give us interruption.

What a transport of joy has the solution of a difficult question given a philosopher, who has before often made it the subject of his meditation without success! And will not the souls of the righteous be surprized with infinite pleasure in succeeding constantly in the discovery of those truths, which were formerly involved in obscurity and darkness; so as to baffle the most penetrating minds, and to confound the wise and prudent?

If men could attain much greater degrees of knowledge, than 'tis possible for them to do in this world, and could be sure of escaping those evil occurrences, which so often cut them off in the bloom of youth, or in the full vigor of their days; yet old age soon overtakes them, and makes a wonderful impression on the mind as well as on the body: so that 'tis no uncommon thing to see the faculties of the soul, which were once strong and lively, become very weak and languid; and what was acquired with much diligence and labour, is, in a great measure,

measure, lost during this life ; so that many a man may be said to survive his learning, and even out-live his reason. But no such declension will attend the knowledge of the blessed. None of the bright ideas they have received shall be blotted from their minds, but their understandings eternally improve by the divine truths, which shall be continually exposed to their view, when they *shall be like God, and see him as he is* ^x.

(2.) Let us farther consider man as a free agent, and capable of morality ; and we shall find, that to make him truly and perfectly blessed, he must have a happiness suited to this part of his character, which indeed dignifies him more than all other advantages. The holiness, justice, goodness, mercy and truth of God, which are term'd his moral perfections, give us the most glorious idea of him : and since a creature is by so much the more excellent, by how much the more nearly it resembles the Creator ; and since men can resemble the great God in nothing so much, as in these moral properties, in being *holy as he is holy* ^y, and *merciful as he is merciful* ^z ; the felicity of the saints in heaven must chiefly consist in moral perfection. It is especially, on this account, that man is said to have been created *in the image of God* ; it was sin which defaced this glorious likeness, and 'tis the design of religion to

^x 1 John 3. 2.

^y 1 Pet. 1. 16.

^z Luke 6. 36.

renew it on the soul, in order to render it happy for ever.

'Tis indeed impossible to be happy without it ; not only because God has, by an irreverfible fentence, determined, that *without holinefs no man fhall fee him* ^a ; but because, in the nature of the thing, 'tis neceffary, that the powers of the foul be turn'd and apply'd to their proper objects, to render her completely happy. An unnatural fituation of the mind will be attended with uneafinefs, which will frequently recur, notwithstanding all the amufements men can poffibly invent to divert or allay it. And creatures, capable of moral agency, could not be happy, fupposing they could be transported into heaven, while their fouls are viciously inclined : for how could thofe, who are deftitute of the love of God, find pleasure in the view of his perfections, the beauty of whose holinefs would constantly reproach them for the deformity of their fin ; and the feverity of whose juftice would ftrike fuch terror on their guilty minds, as would foon convince them, they could no more fubfift in his prefence, than dry stubble can dwell with devouring fire ? Since the happinefs of rational creatures, as was juft now obferved, chiefly confifts in their likenefs to their Creator, and in their communion with him ; where there is no refemblance, but contrary

^a Heb. 12. 14.

inclinations, what communion can there be ?
What communion hath light with darkness ?
And what concord hath Christ with Belial^b ?
 And for the same reason, the company of
 saints and angels would render the wicked
 very uneasy, if they were joined to that blef-
 sed society ; in which they could find nothing
 to sooth and flatter their foolish prejudices
 and corrupt appetites, but such sentiments
 and dispositions as would directly oppose and
 contradict them, nay, censure and condemn
 them.

The bliss of heaven is described by a state
 of rest and tranquillity ; while *the wicked*
are like the raging sea, when it cannot rest,
whose waters cast up mire and dirt^c, as the
 prophet speaks ; and then solemnly repeats
 the same thing in other terms, *There is no*
peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Their
 souls are agitated with furious storms, and
 they are so violently driven by impetuous
 appetites, and so distracted with the tumult
 of their contending passions, that if they
 seek rest, 'tis impossible they should find it,
 while they are possessed with such a legion
 of evil spirits.

But as good men aspire after nothing so
 much as a moral resemblance of the divine
 Being ; and as nothing makes them so uneasy
 in this world as the want of conformity to
 their Maker's will, which often makes them

^b 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15.

| ^c Isa. 57. 20, 21.

groan, and desire to be dissolved^d, that they may put off the body of sin, and be divested of their earthly tabernacle together; and makes each of them cry out in the language of the psalmist, *O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest^e*; so this view of the future glory, as a state of immunity from all sin, and of a complete conformity to the will of God, is, in their account, the most glorious and agreeable that can be given. As no burden is so great to them as that of their sins, and no sorrow so pungent as that which is occasioned by the consideration of their folly and deformity; so nothing so effectually revives their drooping minds, and inspires them with so lively a joy, and so ravishing a pleasure, as the hope of their arrival at a state of perfect holiness, which they know is the highest glory of creatures, and therefore will give them the greatest joy and satisfaction.

(3.) As man is a creature capable of various appetites and affections, his happiness must be considered with reference to these, and must exclude those of them, which either suppose, or are the occasion of imperfection, misery and uneasiness; and fix the rest on their proper objects, giving them a suitable intenseness, and a constant pleasure, and that satisfaction, which gives rest to the soul.

^d 2 Cor. 5, 1, 2, &c.

| ^e Psal. 55. 6.

Thus

Thus the appetites of hunger and thirst will have no room in that blessed state, where the bodies of the saints shall not need those reparations by food and drink, which their present infirmities require. All fear shall be excluded, where there shall be no possibility of danger, and where there shall be *perfect love*, which the apostle says, *casts out fear*. There will be no room for anger, where there will be nothing to provoke and irritate, or give the least uneasiness; no sorrow, where there shall be no mournful scenes to excite that passion, and hope itself shall be rendered useless by the enjoyment of a complete felicity. There all desires will be regular, and these will find their true and full satisfaction; love will be constantly and intensely employed in the view of objects infinitely lovely, and unspeakable joy result from the fruition of substantial and eternal good.

(4.) This happiness will be accommodated to mankind, as conscious of their own thoughts and actions. Now to render creatures of such a constitution happy, the reflections they make upon their own powers and faculties, their thoughts and sensations, their words and actions, must give them no trouble or anxiety, but, on the contrary, great delight and contentment.

The consciousness of the dignity of our nature, of the excellent faculties, talents and endowments God has been pleased to give us,

us, and the abuse of these by what passes in our minds, and in our lives, by the vanity of our imaginations, the temerity and partiality of our judgments, and the irregularity of both our passions and actions, give us frequently a very just occasion of shame and remorse: whereas the reflections we make on the right use of the powers God has given us, and on those thoughts, desires, inclinations and actions, which we have regulated by his will, give us considerable pleasure and satisfaction in this world, tho attended with many infirmities and imperfections. How happy then must the righteous be in the heavenly state, when their minds shall be agreeably entertain'd with reflections on the powers and faculties God has given them, when rais'd to the utmost pitch of perfection of which they are capable! When they shall see the brightest traces of the divine image on their own hearts; when they shall feel no reluctancy to the performance of their duties, but attend them with delight and pleasure; when they shall be conscious of no vain fancy or irregular desire, much less of any disorderly action; but find themselves continually in such a condition, as infinite wisdom and holiness approve, always answering the end of their being, always acting according to the obligations which are upon them, and always finding the highest pleasure and satisfaction in so doing!

As

As we naturally and necessarily love ourselves, it can't but give us extraordinary pleasure to find all the springs and movements of our souls in order; since this is what makes them truly lovely, and renders them the objects of the complacency of God, whose *favour is life*, and in whose *presence there is fulness of joy*.

(5.) If we moreover take a view of man, as a creature compounded of two different kinds of being, *viz.* a soul and body; we shall find that this state of rest and happiness, assign'd to the righteous, is adapted to both parts of him. How happy the souls of good men shall be, has in part been shewn already; but they will not attain perfect bliss till the happy day of the resurrection, when their bodies too shall participate the heavenly glory.

The body indeed is the less noble part of man: yet the holy Scripture assures us, that the bodies of the saints shall be raised from the dust, and clothed with beauty and immortality; that our blessed Saviour *will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself*^f: that tho the bodies of the saints are *sown in corruption*, they shall be *raised in incorruption*; tho *sown in dishonour*, they shall be *raised in glory*; tho *sown in*

^f Phil. 3. 21.

weakness, they shall be raised in power ; and that which is sown a natural body, raised a spiritual one ^z.

How glorious did the body of our Saviour appear, when transfigured, and when he shewed himself to the apostle John ^h ! If the bodies of the saints are to be fashion'd after this glorious model, we may be sure the matter of them will be greatly purg'd and refin'd, and the form of them will be very beautiful and glorious. When this *mortal shall have put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory*, those bodies which shall be form'd for eternity, and to be the vehicles of such happy souls, will be every way fitted and qualified for such an office, and for such a duration.

(6.) As man is a sociable creature, he ought to have agreeable society, as well as other advantages, to render him completely happy : for whatever privileges some melancholy and superstitious fancies have affix'd to perpetual solitude and retirement, we have reason to believe the author of our being, who soon after the formation of the first man, declar'd it was *not good that he should be alone* ⁱ. And that this declaration may be extended farther than conjugal society, will appear from the faculties bestow'd on mankind, which render them capable of doing much service to each other ; nay, both of

^z 1 Cor. 15. 42, 43, 44.

^h Rev. 1. 13, 14, &c.

ⁱ Gen. 2. 18.

contributing to, and partaking of various benefits only to be enjoyed in a community.

The power of communicating ideas, especially by the faculty of speech; the capacity of being affected with each others circumstances, and touch'd with each others passions; sufficiently make appear, that men were, in their original constitution, design'd for society.

'Tis true, the saints above in glory stand not in need of divers of those assistances and supports, which make society so very necessary to us here below: yet this does not hinder, but even in their blessed state, the company of their fellow-creatures, both of the same and of a superior order, may contribute to the advancement of their glory and bliss; as this will give occasion both to the exercise of their virtues, the improvement of their knowledge, and the communication of their joys. Therefore the author of this epistle describes the celestial state, in terms which give us the idea of a most glorious and happy society: *Ye are come, says he, to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels: To the general assembly, and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven; and to God, the judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant^k, &c.*

^k Heb. 12. 22, 23, 24.

And how blessed must that society be, which shall remain for ever free from all pride and vanity, all irregular self-love, all fraud and treachery, all envy and malice, all discord and contention, all suspicion and jealousy; and where humility and charity, sincerity and kindness, peace and harmony, mutual confidence and friendship shall reign for ever!

The terms of natural and civil relation, such as those of brethren and friends, co-heirs and fellow-citizens, sufficiently indicate, that the happiness of heaven will be socially enjoyed: and this well agrees with the natural propension we have to conversation with others, as we have before observed. Nor will the enjoyment of communion with God hinder the society of perfect creatures from being both delightful and profitable to each other, any more than our communion with him, in this imperfect state, interferes with the good offices we render each other, either in the civil or religious communities to which we appertain, and with the advantage and pleasure we reap from thence.

Lastly, this happiness is adapted to the condition of man, consider'd as capable of immortality, and design'd by the author of his being to subsist for ever: and therefore to render men completely happy, they must be secured of the continuance of the happiness

happiness they enjoy ; otherwise the greater it is in degree, the greater will be their solicitude and fear, lest they should be depriv'd of it, if it be precarious and uncertain. Mankind desire not only to be happy, but to be so for ever : and as it is the greatest aggravation of the misery of the wicked in the future state, that they shall have no rest, but be tormented for ever and ever ; so 'tis a mighty inancement to the felicity of the righteous, that it shall continue in an uninterrupted course to eternity. No night shall draw a veil over that bright and glorious day, no cloud shall intercept its lustre in the least degree.

Tho the people of Israel enjoyed rest and peace in the land of Canaan for a time, yet were they sometimes invaded, and at other times led captive into foreign countries by their enemies : but *the rest that remains to the people of God*, is perpetual in its duration, being founded on an *everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure*^l.

To persons, who by their guilt have deserved *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*^m, a state of indolence, or even freedom from great pain and torment, might be accounted a considerable indulgence. What words

^a Sam. 23. 5.

| ^m 2 Thess. 1. 9.

then can express the divine mercy and bounty, which have provided such a state of rest and happiness, as we have been describing, for those who were once dead in trespasses and sins, tho now *risen to newness of life* by Jesus Christ; for those who once were *not his people*, tho now dignified with the title of *the people of God*ⁿ! That they might be happy in every capacity, to the utmost extent, and to all eternity! What love and gratitude, what sacrifices of thanksgiving, what acclamations of praise, what obedience ought to be offered for this unspeakable gift, both in time and thro' eternity, by the heirs of this bliss and partners of this glory, to him who has call'd them to glory and virtue, and made them *kings and priests, to reign with himself for ever!*

2. 'Tis time we now particularly consider the character of the persons who shall enjoy this state of eternal rest and happiness: they are *the people of God*. 'Tis for them, for them only, and for all of them, that this glory is prepared and reserved.

Not all who assume this appellation shall participate this happiness; but those who approve themselves to be the people of God, by complying with the terms of his

ⁿ Rom. 9. 25.

covenant : those who truly believe, *shall enter into this rest*, while those only who make an empty profession of the truth, and *hold it in unrighteousness*, shall fall short of it by their unbelief ; as the carcases of those Israelites, who called themselves the people of God, and yet *dealt treacherously in his covenant*, and provoked him by their unbelief, fell in the wilderness. All the judgments which *happened to them were for examplei*, and are written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the world are come°. Not all who call our Saviour Lord, Lord, shall be admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb ; the answer he makes to some of them, is, *Verily I say unto you, I know you not* P. With the disobedient he thus expostulates ; *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say* ? But *blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in thro' the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and forcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters ; and whosoever loveth and maketh a lye* r.

We have before observed, that none but those, to whom the title of the people of God justly belongs, are capable of this hap-

° 1 Cor. 10. 11.
 P Mat. 25. 11, 12.

| ° Luke 6. 46.
 r Rev. 22. 14, 15.

piness; none but they have a temper of soul, which *makes them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*^f; none but they can relish the refin'd and pure joys of paradise, which are admirably adapted to the desires of their holy souls, which have been so effectually attracted by the grace of God, that, like the trembling needle touch'd by the loadstone, they can find no rest, but in fixing on the beloved object, who first gave them that powerful impression.

And as none but the people of God shall enjoy this high privilege, so not one of them shall be deprived of it; not one of the little ones, who believe in our blessed Saviour, will be neglected or over-look'd by him. He is the good shepherd, who will lose none of the sheep committed to his charge: he can never *forget* his people, since *he has engraven them on the palms of his hands*, and *their walls are continually before him*^g. He will not forget *their work of faith, and labour of love*^h; not so much as *a cup of cold water*, given to any one of his disciples, *in the name of a disciple*, shall lose its reward^u.

3. Let us now, in the last place, consider the certainty of this rest, intimated by its

^f Col. 1. 12.

^g Isa. 49. 16.

^h Heb. 6. 10.

^u Mat. 10. 42.

remaining

remaining to the people of God. Even natural religion gives some light into this matter, and shews, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth*^v. But divine revelation gives a better hope, a firmer assurance, and a more explicit and particular discovery of it. This glorious state of rest is secured to the righteous by the divine promise; by the word, and by the oath of that God, who is truth itself, and for whom 'tis impossible to lye, that we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast; and which enters into that within the veil, whither the fore-runner is for us entered; even Jesus, made a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek^w. What greater assurance can we have of any thing than the divine promise? since the word of God is more stable than the heavens and the earth; these may fail, but his word abideth for ever. The time will come, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; when the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth,

^v Psal. 58. 11.^w Heb. 6. 18, 19, 20.

wherein dwelleth righteousness ^x. When the world shall be delug'd with fire, as it was formerly with water, the new Jerusalem shall receive and secure the people of God, as the ark did then the family of righteous Noah. Tho this *earth and heaven will be shaken*, there are things *that cannot be shaken*, but must *remain* ^y; there's a *kingdom that cannot be moved*, but will abide for ever ^z.

Since a *new and living way is consecrated* for us, *thro' the veil of our Saviour's flesh*, and himself is established a *high priest over the house of God*, we may draw near with a *true heart, in full assurance of faith*—And ought to hold fast the *profession of our faith without wavering*, seeing he is *faithful who hath promised* ^a. Those who believe, have now access by faith to the throne of Christ in heaven; and derive those graces and favours thence, which are the pledges of the future glory they expect, when their persons shall take possession of the regions of bliss. In the mean time he lives and reigns there as their head and representative; and will not fail to give them that celestial inheritance, which he purchased for them at the inestimable price of his blood, and by the prospect of which he

^x 2 Pet. 3. 10, 13.

^y Heb. 12. 27.

^z Ver. 28.

^a Heb. 10. 20, 21, 22, 23.

encourages

encourages them to persist in the ways of truth and holiness, till they *receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls* ^b.

Add to this, that our blessed Redeemer ascended to this glorious place in the view of his disciples ; and soon gave ample proofs of the high station he has there, and of his extensive authority over the universe, by the distribution of extraordinary and miraculous gifts, as the first fruits of that glory, the harvest of which is hereafter to be expected : so that it would argue great weakness and ingratitude, so much as to doubt of the certainty of this *rest which remains to the people of God*.

Thus have I dispatch'd the several things I propos'd particularly to discourse on, and now shall make a few reflections upon the whole.

I. If such a state of rest remains to the people of God, how much does it concern us to be of that happy number, to be *written*, or enroll'd, *among the living in Jerusalem* ^c, as the prophet speaks? When the most haughty and pompous titles, which distinguish some men from their fellow-creatures in civil society, shall vanish and come to nothing ; and when all temporal

^b 1 Pet. 1. 9.

^c Isa. 4. 3.

relation, with its consequences, shall cease, and men of high and low degree, kindred and aliens, be reduced to one common level; 'twill then be of the highest consequence to be numbered among the people of God, to be own'd for his friends and favourites, and to be counted among his children, whom our Saviour will not be *ashamed* to acknowledge for his *brethren* ^d.

How little soever this title of *the people of God* is esteem'd at present by those who idolize the honours of this world, an extraordinary value will be put upon it by men of all degrees at the last day: but a mere pretence to this character will not suffice at the general judgment, as appears by our Saviour's representation of the process of that awful day. *When once*, says he, *the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not, whence you are: then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not, whence you are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and*

^d Heb. 2. 11.

Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out^e; &c. 'Tis therefore of the utmost consequence that we have a just claim to this title. Nor is it difficult to know whether we are of the number of the people of God, if we will seriously inquire into the matter: for, as has been shewn before, none may truly be so called but those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, when 'tis expos'd to them; nor is it sufficient to give credit to it in a general and confus'd manner, but so as effectually to engage us to embrace the terms of salvation propos'd in it. And a faith of this kind will prove itself genuine, by *bringing forth the fruits of righteousness*; and will work by love, which is *the bond of perfection^f*. To examine ourselves strictly on this head, is necessary, lest we fatally deceive ourselves with a *name to live*, while we are *dead^g*; and with a *form of godliness*, while we *deny the power of it^h*.

2. How should this disengage the affections of those who find themselves dignified with this character, and with the privileges belonging to it, from this world, and the things of it; and dispose them to *seek the things which are above, where Christ*

^e Luke 13. 25—28.

^f Col. 3. 14.

^g Rev. 3. 1.

^h 2 Tim. 3. 5.

*sitteth at the right hand of God*ⁱ! How just is it that their hearts should be where their treasure is!

What is there to be found in this world, but vanity and vexation of spirit? as the wise man has long since observed. What wonder then, if good men, in this state of pilgrimage, like the dove which wandered from the ark, can find no rest for the soles of their feet?

If the same inquiry were made after rest and happiness, as is represented in the book of Job, to be made after wisdom and understanding, the same answer might be returned: *Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not in me. It can't be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price of it. It cannot be valued with the gold of ophir, with the precious onyx, or the saphir*^k, &c. But God understands the way thereof, and he knows the place of itⁱ, &c.

Let us not then seek happiness in this world, where it is not to be found; for why should we seek the living among the dead? But let us turn our eyes towards that celestial country where our Saviour resides, and direct our course towards that

ⁱ Col. 3. 1, 2.

^k Job 28. 12 ——— 16.

ⁱ Ver. 23.

heavenly

heavenly Jerufalem, of which we profess to be citizens.

3. The prospect of this state of eternal rest and happiness, may serve to comfort good men under all the afflictions and sorrows which attend them in this world, and also to justify the divine government, in the unequal distribution of temporal good and evil in the present state of things; which sometimes has been ready to shock wise and pious men. *As for me, says the psalmist, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked^m. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagu'd like other menⁿ, &c. Behold these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence: for all the day long have I been plagu'd, and chasten'd every morning^o.*

When 'tis considered, that the joy and pleasure of wicked men are but for a moment, mixed with trouble and remorse here, and will be followed with endless torments in the future world; and that the many troubles which sometimes befall the best of men, shall serve to purify and refine their souls, and to prepare them for eternal life

^m Psal. 73. 2, 3.

ⁿ Ver. 5.

| ^o Ver. 12, 13, 14.

and

and glory, and to inhanche their reward, they may well be reconciled to the most severe discipline of divine providence: *Their light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*^p. Tho they now sow in tears, they shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him^q.

4. This should fortify the minds of good men against the terrors of death. That which renders death so very terrible, is the guilt of our souls; therefore the apostle says, *the sting of death is sin*^r. When 'tis considered as the effect and punishment of sin, and that which leads men to the tribunal of the Almighty, to receive an irreverfible sentence according to their works, it has a dreadful aspect indeed. But if this sting be taken away, if our consciences are sprinkled with *the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin*^s, and we are reconciled to God by the cross of our Redeemer; if, *being justified freely by his grace, we have peace with God*, we may look into the valley of the shadow of death without fearing any evil, seeing 'tis to the righteous the way to eternal life and glory. Death

^p 2 Cor. 4. 17.

^q Psal. 126. 5, 6.

^r 1 Cor. 15. 56.

^s 1 John 1. 7.

will deliver them from all the fears and dangers, the cares and troubles, the sorrows and pains to which they are liable at present; and give them an entrance into that glorious rest which has been described to you; into those calm and bright regions, which are never ruffled by storms and tempests, nor sullied by clouds and darkness: where misery and pain can have no place, because there's no room for sin and guilt; but where perfect holiness and perfect happiness shall keep equal pace to eternity.

The view of this rest has made many christians, who, on other occasions, seem'd to have no great courage or presence of mind, triumph over the grave, when they have found themselves dropping into it.

It was this glorious prospect which supported the soul of that reverend person, whose death we so justly lament, and whose life must needs render his memory ever fragrant to us: it was this inspired him with patience and submission, constancy and joy, during a tedious sickness, and at the very article of death.

And since there are divers things relating both to his life and death, which were very exemplary and edifying; I persuade myself it will be thought very seasonable for me, now to give a brief account of some passages worthy to be remarked in both.

That

That might justly be said of him, which the apostle says of his son Timothy, that *from a child he knew the holy scriptures, and that these made him wise unto salvation, thro' faith which is in Christ Jesus*^s. The great delight he then had in hearing the joyful sound of the gospel, made him frequent divers religious assemblies, and that not without some hazard, at a time when they were often disturbed and interrupted, and sometimes assaulted with violence, while they were worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences.

Some of the sermons which he heard in those assemblies, made a deep and lasting impression on his mind; and his early conversion to God was attended with an earnest desire to be employed in the work of the ministry.

This inclination grew so strong and urgent, that nothing could dissuade him from his design, of serving God in this publick capacity. To this purpose he applied himself to those studies, which he thought most conducive to the end he had in view; and that with so much diligence and success, that in a little time his *profiting appeared to all*, and at length he approved himself *a workman, that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*^t.

^s 2 Tim. 3. 15.

| ^t 2 Tim. 2. 15.

God,

God, who inclined his heart to this work, and called him to it, had endowed him with divers considerable talents to prepare him for it. He had a solid judgment as well as a lively fancy, and quickness of thought as well as facility of expression. His strong and musical voice, together with that agreeable mixture of gravity and sweetness, which reign'd in his countenance, tended to make way for the truths and reasons he delivered, by awakening the attention, and engaging the affections of his auditors. He taught with clearness, and argu'd with strength; exhorted with vehemence, and reprov'd with a becoming authority; and found the art, which so few who speak in publick attain, of blending reason and eloquence so happily together, that they mutually assisted and embellished each other, and equally adorned his discourses; which were adapted at once to improve the mind, and touch the heart, and had something in them which was entertaining both to the learned and illiterate, both to the polite, and less cultivated part of mankind.

Tho what I now speak, can give but a faint idea of his excellent gifts to some of this audience; yet I doubt not that it raises in the minds of those, who were wont to hear him, a lively remembrance of the manner of his preaching, and must needs make them reflect on the great loss the publick

has sustain'd by his death, at an age which seem'd to give room to hope, that the world might have reap'd yet much more advantage by his labours.

His great improvement, next to the divine blessing on his assiduous studies, was owing partly to the generous ambition he had to excel; which induced him to apply himself to close study and meditation, lest he should produce any thing crude and undigested; partly to the prudent choice he made in his younger days, to converse with men not only of sense and learning, but of a polite genius too; and partly to his great modesty, which gave him a continual jealousy of his own performances, and engag'd him frequently to submit what he had compos'd, to the censure of those friends he thought capable of advising him; and to intreat them, with uncommon importunity, not to suffer any faults to escape their remark, but to be free in advertising him of every thing which might seem to them either defective or redundant. And indeed he would be easily convinced of any oversight or mistake, and gratefully acknowledge the kindness of any one who pointed it out to him. Which shew'd this did not arise from a vain affectation of modesty, but from his humility, and the real diffidence he had of himself. And indeed he deserved the critical severity of his friends, in knowing how to
value

value that sort of kindness, and in receiving the hints and intimations they gave him after so obliging a manner.

Nay, this humble and happy temper adhered to him even to the last; so that he could not be easy in publishing any thing to the world, without first consulting some of his particular friends. Which I the rather take notice of, to recommend to such young ministers, as are present in this assembly, the imitation of so profitable an example: for 'tis not to be doubted that they would find their account in it, nay, that it would mightily contribute to their improvement, to use the same method; if they have but the good sense to expose their compositions to persons capable of observing to them their mistakes, and have humility enough to hearken to the advice of those who are able to inform them.

It was none of the least of this excellent man's qualifications for the ministerial work, that he knew how to *behave himself in the church of God*, in regard of the exercise of that discipline which is so necessary to christian societies. Many here present know, with what patience and meekness, with what gravity and prudence, with what impartiality and faithfulness he demean'd himself in this congregation, and with what prudence and conduct he manag'd its affairs upon all occasions.

His good will and charity to mankind in general, was conspicuous in the indefatigable labours he sustained, in endeavouring to promote the interest of their souls. He often lamented the unreasonable differences among christians, and had a hearty respect for all who held the essentials of the christian religion, tho of different sentiments in matters of lesser moment: and as he had a mind too generous to be determined by the opinion of others, without making a strict inquiry into the reasons of things; so his modesty and charity were too great, not to give all due deference to those who entertained notions, which he could not see reason to embrace. And whereas he thought it his duty frequently to expose the errors of those of the Romish communion, in terms of some force and warmth, he desired it might be signified to the world, after his decease, that the zeal and fervour he shewed on those occasions, did not arise from a disaffection to any of their persons, but from the deep sense he had of the pernicious tendency of their errors, and from the ardent desire he had to reclaim them from those delusions, as well as to prevent others from falling into them.

He was not only serviceable to this congregation, but useful to many others: and tho his labours were chiefly bestowed on you, yet his *praise was in the gospel thro'out*
many

many other *churches* ^u, to whom he occasionally preached, and whom he assisted with his advice in many exigencies.

That piety and charity which adorned his conversation in the time of his health, seemed to increase their strength and lustre during his long sickness; a sickness which gradually weakened his constitution, and at last grew strong enough to dissolve it. I can't forbear to think, that his extraordinary labour in the ministerial work, laid the foundation of his sickness; for such was the fervency of his spirit, that it often raised the tone of his voice to such a pitch, as could not but exhaust his animal spirits to a very great degree, and must needs, at length, bring great weakness upon him. He was a *burning and a shining light* ^v, in which we rejoiced for a season; but how soon is this light extinguished! He was *glad to spend and be spent* for you ^w, for the service of your faith, and for the furtherance of your joy.

I must not omit to take notice to you, how edifying his conversation was in the time of his sickness, and how difficult it was to restrain him from exhausting the little strength he had left, in giving serious exhortations to those who came to visit him. Not content with this, he desired many

^u 2 Cor. 8. 18.

^v John 5. 35.

^w 2 Cor. 12. 15.

persons to be sent for, whom either the ties of friendship and acquaintance had endeared to him, or whom he had observed to attend his ministry, without knowing what effect it had upon their souls, or those with whom he knew God had intrusted considerable talents, that he might earnestly recommend to them the improvement of time, in order to their eternal felicity.

He observed to them, that religion was a real thing, and of the greatest importance of all others; that they might well believe him to be in earnest in what he said, since he was going to die, and to give up his accounts to God. He assured them, he had not *followed cunningly devised fables*, nor preached for *filthy lucre*^x; but that his *rejoicing was in the testimony of his conscience*, that in *simplicity, and godly sincerity*^y, he had exercised his ministerial function: that he had taught the *truth as it is in Jesus*, according to the best of his judgment; and that he rely'd on the same doctrine he had publish'd to others, for the salvation of his own soul. He pressed them with all the earnestness imaginable to consult the interest of their souls, and to improve the several advantages God had put into their hands for this purpose; and this in such pathetick language, and in so affecting a manner, that

^x 2 Pet. I. 16.

| ^y 2 Cor. I. 12.

it could not but make an impressiion on all who were present, and drew abundance of tears from their eyes. I would fain hope, a lasting impressiion is made on the hearts, at least of divers persons, to whom he particularly address'd his dying words. God grant, that a death which has cost us so dear, and given us so acute a sorrow, may be the occasion of the spiritual life of many souls, and cause joy both in heaven and on earth.

During the time of his tedious illness, God was pleas'd highly to favour him, in continuing to him the exercise of his reason, and in visiting him with the light of his countenance; so that it might be said of him, as of the blessed man described by the psalmist, *The Lord strengthened him on the bed of languishing, and made all his bed in his sickness*^z. He was generally in a humble, patient and resign'd posture of mind, neither chusing life nor death; or to use his own expressiion, *neither asham'd to live, nor afraid to die*: for he knew, that *whether he lived, he lived unto the Lord; and whether he died, he died unto the Lord; and that whether he lived or died, he was the Lord's*^a: that *Christ would be magnified in him, whether by life or by death; and therefore to him to live was Christ, and to die was gain*^b.

^z Psal. 41. 3.

^a Rom. 14. 8.

^b Phil. 1. 20, 21.

So far as I, who conversed intimately with him, could perceive, or have learned from others who attended him, his faith and hope were vigorous and lively; he had great peace and tranquillity in his conscience, and sometimes joy unspeakable and full of glory, especially towards the close of his days: for he seemed to improve in the heavenly frame of his mind, as he drew near the heavenly state; and a little before his exit, declared that his work in this world was finished; and that now he had nothing more to do, but to resign his soul into the arms of his Redeemer; which he was heard to do just before he expired, saying, *Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!*

So lived and so died this eminent servant of God, whose memory is blessed, and will be precious in the account of all who knew the excellent gifts and abilities God was pleased to bestow on him.

The remembrance of these, and of the virtues and graces which shone in him, justly aggravate our sorrow; and it would argue stupidity, not to mourn on such an occasion as this. The loss of so well qualified a minister, and of so faithful a friend, may well afflict us deeply. Yet are we not to *mourn* as those *who have no hope*^c, because we have reason to conclude that he is entered into

^c 1 Thess. 4. 13.

everlasting rest, and has gained infinitely by dying. It will be well, if the grief occasioned by his decease become a godly sorrow, by a just application of our thoughts to the voice of God's providence, which speaks so loudly to us in this severe affliction.

May you, who are members of this congregation, remember how he *watched over you in the Lord* for the space of about twenty years, and how *he ceased not to warn you night and day with tears*^d; may you follow his faith, considering the end of his conversation^e. Ask counsel by your prayers, of the great *shepherd and bishop of your souls*^f, in all your difficulties; resign yourselves to his conduct, and beg earnestly that he would give you another *pastor according to his own heart, who may feed you with knowledge and understanding*^g. Remember particularly, the pressing exhortations your late minister so often made you, to continue unanimous, and to cultivate charity and brotherly love among yourselves; that God may still extend the wing of his protection over you, and provide for the necessities of your souls; that he may *blest the provision of his house, and satisfy the poor with bread*^h. And con-

^d Acts 20. 31.

^e Heb. 13. 7.

^f 1 Pet. 2. 25.

^g Jer. 3. 15.

^h Psal. 132. 15.

stantly

stantly regard the blessed hope which is set before you, that *rest which remains to the people of God*. So run that ye may obtainⁱ; so labour that ye may enter into this rest; that you may rejoice together with your pastor in the day of the Lord, when the many souls converted and edified by his ministry, shall be his *crown, his glory, and joy^k*; when he shall surrender his charge to the great shepherd, saying, *Lord, here am I, and the children thou hast given me*.

All who knew the value of this great and good man, must needs partake of the common sorrow which his death has occasioned: but what words can express the piercing grief of one, who is left in the solitary state of widowhood by so tender a husband! and with what compassion should we address our prayers to *the father of mercies, and God of all consolation*, to support her under this heavy stroke, and to teach her a becoming submission to his will in so trying a case? a case which calls loudly for our commiseration, and may well make her cry out with the saddest accent of sorrow, *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends! for the hand of God hath touched me^l*. Yet let not her for-

ⁱ 1 Cor. 9. 24.^k Phil. 4. 1. 1 Thess. 2. 20.^l Job 19. 21.

rowful soul utterly refuse to be comforted, since it ought to be accounted a favour of divine providence, to have been related to so valuable a person ; and since it has pleased God, for the mitigation of her trouble, to give her the satisfaction of observing his christian behaviour during his long sickness, and of hearing so often the gracious words which proceeded from him ; so as to give her just reason to believe, his righteous soul is now in a happy state, waiting for the resurrection of his body, while she has good hope, thro' grace, in a little time, to enter by the same steps into that rest which he has already attained.

To conclude : Let us all account ourselves pilgrims and strangers here, as the patriarchs did ; and as such, let us *abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul* ^m. Let us make it appear that we are in quest of a better country, by withdrawing our affections from this world, and fixing them *on the things above*. Let us keep the eye of our faith intent on that *kingdom which cannot be removed* ; and let us be constantly doing our Lord's will, that whenever he shall call us hence, being found so doing, we may enter into this state of joy

^m 1 Pet. 2. 11.

and rest, which remains to the people of God; whither Christ, our fore-runner, is already entered, and into which he will receive all those who love and wait for his appearance.

The end of the first VOLUME.

12 JY 62



